

# LOUISIANA COMMISSION ON CIVIC EDUCATION

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## Louisiana Commission on Civic Education

### APPROVED MINUTES

November 20, 2020

#### I. CALL TO ORDER

A meeting of the Louisiana Commission on Civic Education was held on Friday, November 20, 2020 in House Committee Room 5 at the State Capitol in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The chairman, Judge C. Wendell Manning, called the meeting to order at 2:09 p.m.

Judge Manning: This – , I'm Judge Wendell Manning, chairman of the Louisiana Commission on Civic Education. I welcome you to our fall meeting. At this time, I ask, uh, Candace, to please call the roll.

#### II. ROLL CALL

The secretary called the roll and the following was noted:

##### MEMBERS PRESENT

Judge C. Wendell Manning, Chairman  
Shan Davis, Vice Chairperson  
Fredell Butler  
Peggy Cotogno  
Barry Erwin  
Rep. Barbara Reich Freiberg  
Ryan Gremillion  
Judd Jeansonne (on behalf of Kyle Wedberg)  
Polly Johnson  
Sen. Beth Mizell  
Morgan Robertson  
Jill Roshto

Lauren Russell  
Kenny Shutt (on behalf of Jerry Raehal)  
Jamie Staub  
Monica Taylor  
Jackson Wright

MEMBERS ABSENT

Beth Courtney  
Rep. Gary Carter (on behalf of Rep. Raymond Garfalo)  
Melissa Cloutet (on behalf of Robert Travis Scott)  
Doris Hicks  
Michael Ince  
Alijah Jackson (on behalf of Sen. Cleo Fields)  
Terry Landry  
Lawrence J. Narcisse  
Joel Watson, Jr.

STAFF PRESENT

Candace Shields, Senior Secretary  
Megan Bella, Senate Staff and LYAC Coordinator

Ms. Shields: Sixteen members present.

Judge Manning: All right. Thank you, Candace, for calling roll. I wanted to remind everyone that the Louisiana Commission on Civic Education has twenty-six members with a quorum requirement of fourteen. Due to safe distancing requirements in light of COVID, members are having to spread –, and be spaced out throughout our committee room. It allows for thirteen members, including myself, on the dais. And then today, we have sixteen members present thus we have quorum. Commission members will be rotated on and off at each of our meetings in an attempt to give everyone an opportunity to sit here –, a head –, of the meeting room. Because of the limited seating available, we do have some members in the front row of our audience today and at the appropriate times I encourage commission members who are in the audience who would like to speak to please raise your hand and then come forward to the floor mic. Since we only meet twice a year, I want to take this opportunity to have everyone, starting on my right here at the top, to briefly introduce themselves and tell about their role here on the commission. And, we will begin with Representative Freiberg.

Rep. Freiberg: Good afternoon, uh, I'm Barbara Freiberg. Uh, I am a long-term, uh, educator from years back and, uh, I'm not quite sure what my role is because this is my first meeting and I look forward to whatever that role might be. Thank you.

Judge Manning: We certainly welcome you.

Sen. Mizell: Hi. I'm, uh, State Senator Beth Mizell. Uh, I serve as the Senate Pro Tempe right now. So, ah, I'm –, can sit on any meetings. More meetings are more exciting than others and I am looking forward to –, possibilities of what we can accomplish here. So, uh, I'm –, I'm pleased to be here. I want to thank Judge Manning for making it happen in spite of COVID and in spite of all of the obstacles we've had this past year. Ah, and my –, my goal for being here –, I'm a mother and a grandmother and being an elected official has shown me how desperately needed, ah, informing our young people on the role of government and our elected officials are. So, ah, I'm –, Im looking forward to having the opportunity to have input on that. Thank you.

Ms. Davis: Hey. I'm Shan Davis. I'm the BESE designee for the, uh, Board of Education. Uh, I am the executive director of BESE.

Ms. Roshto: I'm Jill Roshto. I'm the executive director of Louisiana Association of Non-Profit Organizations and we're involved in education in the non-profit sector. Glad to be here.

Ms. Taylor: Monica. Can you hear me?

Judge Manning: Yes. It should be on.

Ms. Taylor: Uh, Monica Taylor. I am the designee for Attorney General Jeff Landry. We, uh, our office does a lot of consumer protection. We also, um, educate law enforcement to deal with victims of sexual assault/domestic violence. We do a lot of talk about smart phones, uh, cell phones. How to be safe with them. Child predators. And, uh, we run the, uh, Crimes Against Children –, um, Crimes Against Children Unit for the state of Louisiana and also we run the LifeSmarts program which is a general knowledge competition that goes out to all of the high schools every year.

Judge Manning: All right. Thank you.

Mr. Wright: I'm Jackson Wright, policy research analyst with the Governor's Office. I work, uh, pretty closely with the Senior Policy Advisor for Education, Richard Hartley. Um, I'm a former middle school teacher and also, uh, ran a Youth and Government, um, Model UN and –, and, you know, youth led stuff. So, uh, very –, was very interested in this and, uh, really excited to be able

to –, to –, to be in this, uh, commission. So, I would just say I am looking forward to playing a more active role somewhere too, Rep. Freiberg. So, thank you.

Ms. Johnson: Hi. My name is Polly Prince Johnson and I'm the president and CEO of the Louisiana Association of Broadcasters. Hello, Monica.

Ms. Taylor: Hi.

Ms. Johnson: I've been on the commission since 2013.

Mr. Shutt: Uh, yes, I'm Kenny Shutt. Uh, I'm sitting in for –, we have a new executive director who couldn't make it. Jerry Raehal. And, uh, we're with the Louisiana, uh, with the, uh, Louisiana Press Association. And, uh, we're the trade organization for the Louisiana news industry or news media. Uh, we, uh, work real closely with the legislature during the sessions and make sure we keep freedom of information and those types of things in, uh, in play and –, and protect, uh, our citizens. Um, and, uh, we also have, uh, Brian is a –, I'm –, I'm the ad director so we're a little section, uh, where I actually do, uh, marketing and things like that through our members. We have over eighty member –, uh, news media members in our organization.

Mr. Jeansonne: Jud Jeansonne, executive director of Volunteer Louisiana in the Office of Lieutenant Governor. Uh, we promote civic engagement through national service and volunteerism, um, particularly with Americorps programs. We have sixteen Americorps programs across the state that engage in over a thousand Louisianians in service, uh, every single year. So, uh, this commission aligns with the work of our agency and glad to be here.

Ms. Staub: Jamie Staub. I am the state coordinator for Project Citizen. A program based on –, out of the Center for Civic Education in Calabasas, California. I was –, I'm a retired educator. Taught social studies for thirty-two years in the Jefferson Parish Public School System.

Ms. Cotogno: I am executive director for Law –, for the Louisiana Center for Law and Civic Education whose mission is to promote law related education and good citizenry.

Judge Manning: We also have a number of members in the audience. If they'd take a moment, please, to come up to the floor mic and re-introduce themselves.

Mr. Erwin: Hi. I'm Barry Erwin and I'm president of, uh, Council for a Better Louisiana. We're a statewide non-profit public policy group with, uh, a large focus on education, uh, fiscal



policies, governmental ethics. Ah, but we also, uh, are involved with a lot of activities around –, around civic engagement. So, thank you very much.

Mr. Gremillion: I'm Ryan Gremillion. I'm the deputy chief of staff for the Office of Policy and Governmental Affairs at the Department of Education.

Ms. Robertson: Good afternoon, everybody. My name is Morgan Robertson. I'm the communication officer for the Senate and I serve as the Senate's Back to School coordinator as well and I'll be giving a brief presentation in just a minute.

Ms. Russell: I'm Lauren Russell. I'm the communication deputy director for the House and, same as Morgan, I do the members' Back to School Program.

Judge Manning: I believe that concludes all of our commission members. Uh, as –, we do have a number of representatives from the Legislative Youth Advisory Committee and Megan Bella when she gives her report will be introducing all of you. We also want to welcome our citizens throughout our state and beyond who may be watching this meeting being streamed. At this time, I would like to share a few remarks as this is the meeting in which we will be asked to approve our annual report. As we face this on going COVID-19 pandemic and civil unrest in many places throughout our nation during this election year, the importance of citizens possessing an understanding of their rights and responsibilities is even more apparent. The members of the Louisiana Commission on Civic Education are –, been continuing to be committed to educating all of our citizens on the important principles that form the foundation of our representative democracy. Commission members are continually working to identify civic education projects throughout our state and to promote public awareness of those projects. The contributions through our Annual Report we will be reviewing in a few moments from representatives of the various member organizations show a vast and rich offering of civic education opportunities for all of our citizens. Over the past year, we began work to create a statewide web-based civic education event calendar to increase public awareness of these opportunities. The internet calendar is an important component to the development of the commission's database of civic education resources as we strive to fulfill the legislative mandate of serving as a clearing house for public information on civic education. The commission is building upon our network of civic education professionals and strengthening these partnerships. At each commission meeting, we are briefed by our member partner agencies about current activities around our shared mission. Member organizations have outlined their plans of how they are providing educational programming in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to adult civic education outreach, the commission has placed priority upon efforts to educate the youth of our state on the importance of citizen involvement in our government. At commission meetings we are regularly updated on current youth civic education and engagement

activities including the Legislators' Back to School program. Strong support and oversight is provided to the Louisiana Legislative Youth Advisory Council. The council is a group of twenty-one outstanding young people selected from across the state through a process that recognizes their commitment to and enthusiasm for our representative democracy and the legislative process. Council members caucus together to become a voice for youth issues in the legislative arena. Members provide updates at each commission meeting and we will hear one of those updates in a moment. Members have testified at the Capitol on pending legislation. They've returned to their schools and communities as advocates for citizen participation. The council's work has continued to be highlighted through its members involvement in Louisiana Public Broadcasting's series "Louisiana Public Square". Their thoughtful and informed comments have impressed decision makers and the public in general. Commission members understand that for our state to flourish and succeed our citizens, young and old alike, must possess knowledge and understanding of the principles of representative democracy. With this knowledge, citizens must also share a commitment to civil discourse and civic engagement. It is my pleasure to serve as your chairman with these committed members who have introduced themselves as they strive to achieve the goals of the Louisiana Commission on Civic Education and we are thankful for the opportunity to further this important work.

### **III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Judge Manning: That being said, at this time, the chair would entertain a motion to approve the minutes from our meeting of June the 26<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

Ms. Taylor: (Inaudible).

Ms. Davis: (Inaudible).

Judge Manning: Properly moved by Ms., uh, Taylor. Seconded by Ms. Davis. Any discussion with regard to the motion. Hearing none, all in favor say aye.

Members: Aye.

Judge Manning: Any opposed no? Any abstentions? The motion carries.

Ms. Taylor made a motion to approve the minutes of June 26, 2020. There being no objection, the minutes were approved.

#### **IV. APPROVAL OF ANNUAL REPORT**

Judge Manning: We will now move to review and approval of the Annual Report. Previously you were forwarded the 2019-2020 Annual Report. This is the report prepared by, uh, Tammy as well as Candace in which each of our member organizations have been asked to contribute a brief synopsis of their work in the area of civic education. It includes also the chairman's report and review of the work of the Legislative Youth Advisory Council throughout the past year. At this time, the chair would entertain a motion that we approve this Annual Report.

Sen. Mizell: (Inaudible).

Judge Manning: Been properly moved by Senator Mizell.

Ms. Davis: (Inaudible).

Judge Manning: Seconded by Ms. Davis. Any discussion? Any corrections or amendments? Hearing none, all in favor say aye.

Members: Aye.

Judge Manning: Any opposed no? Any abstentions? The motion carries. And, thank you all for having reviewed those and for your contributions to this report.

Senator Beth Mizell made a motion to approve the 2019-2020 Annual Report. There being no objection, the Annual Report was approved.

#### **VI. UPDATES**

Judge Manning: Now we'll move on to updates. First, addressing the Legislators' Back to School Program. Ms. Robertson and who will you have with you? Ms. Russell? Okay.

##### **A. Legislator's Back to School Program: Morgan Robertson and Lauren Russell**

Ms. Robertson: Good afternoon. Hello again. Uh, my name is Morgan Robertson and this is Lauren. We are the coordinators for the state's Back to School Program. Um, Back to School Program took kind of a different turn this year as we all know because of COVID-19. We are currently, um, in talks with the national organization NCSL trying to figure out if they've started something to kind of get a virtual visit program going. Uh, I think that would be a good opportunity not only during the pandemic but in the future for legislators to be able to go back to

the classroom through that virtual avenue and visit with their students. I don't think anything will actually take the place of the legislator actually being there creating this, you know, persona for the –, the children to kind of learn about, but I think that's kind of where things are going to be forced to move to.

Ms. Russell: Yeah, I completely agree and it came up a little bit at the June meeting. Just coming up with options. Um, and like she said, we would need to discuss it with NCSL to see what they would approve as far as the –, what would be considered an actual school visit. I don't see us getting into schools or necessarily would encourage legislators to visit a school just given how up in the air everything is. Um, I know that conference calls and Zoom meetings have become much more popular, but with some students at school and some schools –, some students learning virtually it –, it's kind of hard to get those set up, even still. Um, now, we do have a PowerPoint presentation completely customizable by our offices. Uh, I know that not all schools have access to the kind of technology that you would need for a PowerPoint presentation. Even so, we can explore avenues for that, but it is just one way just to keep them engaged, keep students informed, and get the legislators in some way, shape or form in the class room or at least in front of the students.

Judge Manning: Well, thank you for this update. Let me invite the members of our commission, if they have any questions they would like to ask you relative to your programming.

Ms. Taylor: Um, so, ya'll haven't –, no legislators have done Zoom presentations or virtual presentations yet?

Ms. Russell: Not yet.

Ms. Taylor: Okay. Do you know if any other states or if the national –, if they've done any at all yet?

Ms. Robertson: So, I've actually put out a listserve, uh, to our other coordinators around the state. I haven't gotten any feedback yet because I think some states are still even working from home. So, I think things are kind of still in such a flux that they're reluctant to start doing those things, but I think that's where it's headed.

Ms. Taylor: Okay.

Ms. Russell: It kind of seems like they're a little behind as well given that they were out for so long.

Ms. Taylor: Um, hmm.

Ms. Russell: So, there isn't a whole lot of room for that kind of stuff to fit just at the moment. I'm sure moving forward that will change.

Judge Manning: Senator Mizell?

Sen. Mizell: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I –, I'm just curious because I love doing that, but I know when –, when we would go we had the blue coloring book or the pink coloring book.

Ms. Robertson: Um, hmm.

Sen. Mizell: And they seemed like from another time.

Ms. Robertson: We're –, we're actually working on updating the coloring books.

Sen. Mizell: Are you –? Okay.

Ms. Robertson: And the activity books. Yeah.

Sen. Mizell: Because there was more Louisiana history than actual civics.

Ms. Robertson: So, uh, we also have –, and, you know, get with me if you ever –, when –, hopefully when you go back and not if.

Sen. Mizell: Right.

Ms. Robertson: Uh, NCSL provides different sorts of materials than the state activity and coloring books, and it is focused on civic engagement. Those are also kind of out of date so that would be a conversation with NCSL to see if they're updating their program and materials, but I do have some sort of those. It's more nationally orientated rather than state, but we do have those available. But, I mean, if we're going to start going virtual, you know, PowerPoints, videos.

Sen. Mizell: Um, hmm.

Ms. Robertson: If you want to get with our office or if any of our members wanted to get with our office, we could even do a video visit where we would video you ahead of time and you could send that to your schools. So, there are options. We just have to implement them and kind of, you know, see how we can make those grow.

Sen. Mizell: Right. Because –, well, yeah, I mean, they could be holding something –, we'd sent prior and then we could have it where we –.

Ms. Robertson: Right. Yeah.

Sen. Mizell: And, discuss it together so that –, that would be great. But I –, uh, I'm anxious to see the –. Thank ya'll for what you do. Ya'll make –, ya'll make it a lot easier for us to get into the schools.

Ms. Robertson: Thanks.

Sen. Mizell: And, I appreciate that.

Ms. Russell: We do have the means of printing all of those coloring books and activity books as well. So if you have ideas of things that would be more civic focused that would still engage the students, we are more than happy to include –, and inform things like that too.

Sen. Mizell: Thank you.

Judge Manning: Ms. Taylor?

Ms. Taylor: I was turning my thing off.

Judge Manning: Okay.

Ms. Taylor: I thought.

Judge Manning: Any other questions or comments? Uh, yes, Representative Freiberg.

Rep. Freiberg: Uh, thank you, Mr. Chair. Uh, as a newbie, could you just give me a brief synopsis of what this program looks like? When does it normally take place? How many schools does a legislator or senator normally, uh, see? What goes on when you go into the class room?

Ms. Russell: Uh.

Rep. Freiberg: It can be brief. I just –, I want to know a little bit about it. I've heard of the program, but I have never participated.

Ms. Russell: Yeah. Absolutely. And, we provide the, uh, a pretty thick manual whenever you come through your orientation. I can totally run through that down to details. Uh, but it starts at the beginning of the school year and it goes all the way through until term is finished. You are welcome to visit as many schools as you would like. Um, each member, legislator –, uh, we do try to get to go to at least a school; obviously, the more the better. Um, and we can customize it as much as you would like. Like Morgan said, we do get materials from NCSL. We do have the color and activity books that you can bring with you. Uh, with those being so out of date, we did come up with the PowerPoint system, um, and, again, you can customize that with any information. Uh, we also have a lot of, like, cards with talking points to kind of help you out because every legislator's visit is going to be a little bit different because you want to put your own personality into it as well.

Ms. Robertson: Yeah. And just to add to –, for –, actually for facilitating the visit, um, I'm not exactly sure how Lauren runs things in the House side, but, uh, some legislators prefer to connect with the school on their own, maybe if they've got a personal relationship, like a child or grandchild goes to their school, um, but all of the –, my senators are welcome to call me and I can facilitate those visits. And a lot of times, what I do, uh, ahead of time is I contact the teacher. We discuss it. Um, I encourage her to ask the students to, uh, put together, like, a list of questions so that you're not just like a deer in the headlights with your students that are there. Uh, so we kind of facilitate those visits to make it, like, the most beneficial for the students while you are there because you are only there for an hour or so, so you want to try to get the most out of your visit for you and for them.

Rep. Freiberg: And, is this –, uh, all these presentations done like K through 12 or just in elementary school or what?

Ms. Russell: Uh, I have material from kindergarten all the way through to high school, even some adult material as well.

Ms. Robertson: Yeah, it would just depend on, you know, what age group you would feel more comfortable talking with.

Rep. Freiberg: Okay. Thank you very much.

Ms. Robertson: Sure.

Judge Manning: Any other questions or comments from commission members? All right. Just one second.

Ms. Johnson: Just a quick question. How old is the information?

Ms. Russell: I mean, when I got it, it was at least six years ago.

Ms. Robertson: Yeah, so the –, the information provided by NCSL is probably about five to ten years old, and our old coloring books are probably like eight –.

Ms. Russell: Oh, they are much older than that. But, like she was saying the color and activity books are more like what is the state flower, here is a word search of Louisiana-theme words. So, outdated, yes. Still relevant, I guess. So, yeah. Yeah, but we're open to updating things.

Ms. Johnson: Okay.

Judge Manning: Any other questions or comments? Ms. Davis?

Ms. Davis: Um, I liked Senator Mizell's idea about civic education, uh, gearing it –, especially the high school portion. There's been a lot of bills passed recently about students not being aware of a lot of the requirements nationally and statewide. I'm sure the department and BESE could help with any standards or curriculum relevant to that topic if you need some assistance with that, but I think that would be a good way to go with the high school presentation, if nothing else.

Judge Manning: Any other comments or questions? Well, thank you, Ms. Robertson and Ms. Russell for your hard work in that regard.

**B. LYAC: Megan Bella**

Judge Manning: Now I call upon Megan Bella for an update on the Legislative Youth Advisory Council. And, thank you, Megan. Just one second. And, again, our COVID process and procedures, they're –, they're wiping down the –. Thank you, Megan, for your hard work too with this organization.

Ms. Bella: My name is Megan Bella. I'm the coordinator with the Legislative Youth Advisory Council and also a member of the Senate staff. And, just really quickly, like, if you are not familiar with LYAC, which is what we call the program, uh, it's for high school students throughout the state. We have thirty-one members and they are appointed to the council annually. Uh, we open up the application period in January and it goes through March. The application is made up of short answer questions as well as two letters of recommendation and the members of this commission actually score the applications and that is how the students are



chosen. Uh, you know, our main thing is we meet every other month. This year, we kind of done a hybrid of Zoom and some in-person meetings to accommodate with COVID, and the students come together and just discuss topics that relate to youth. They also will try to bring a topic to the legislature each year to get a bill or resolution passed. And, for my update, I'm going to turn it over to the students, but if you have any questions I'll answer them after.

Judge Manning: Megan, do you want the students to come up to the desk there with you or to the, uh, floor mic?

Ms. Bella: Whatever works for you.

Judge Manning: Uh, if I could have each of the students come to the floor mic and then briefly introduce themselves and tell us where you are from and then –.

Testifying and providing information to the committee was Steffek Rainey, representing Legislative Youth Advisory Council.

Mr. Rainey: Okay. Hello. My name is Steffek Rainey. I'm a senior at Catholic High School here in Baton Rouge. Uh, I'm a first year member of LYAC and I'm excited to serve on this, uh, committee. It's been a great experience so far to get civically engaged and I am excited for what we're going to continue to do. Um, so in July, we usually start off the year by holding a two-day in-person seminar here at the State Capitol. Obviously, we couldn't do that this year because of COVID so instead we used Zoom to, uh, hold a meeting in place of that. And, in the meeting we introduced each other. Uh, we decided how we were going to hold our elections. We decided that we would hold them at the next in-person meeting. And, we –, the officers or the –, the candidates for officers introduced each other. And, uh, we also picked our designee for the Police Training and De-escalation Task Force.

Judge Manning: Thank you. Glad to have you.

Testifying and providing information to the committee was Embeth Coyle, representing Legislative Youth Advisory Council.

Miss Coyle: Hi. I'm Embeth Coyle. I'm a senior at Loyola College Prep in Shreveport and I'm a first year member on LYAC. And, so, our next in-person meeting was the September meeting and we heard from the Speaker of the House and then we had our elections. Our president is Grant. Vice President, Molly. Secretary, Emma Mercy. Communications, Martin and Parliamentarian is me. And, so, we have got –, we picked our committees and talked at our committees a little bit. And, I introduced a system to help us, like, better communicate by

making a LYAC Google drive to where all of our members –, because we all have, like, our phones and if you don't have your phone, like, your i-Pad. And we have, like, a Google account and, so, we added, like, everyone's Google account and we have, like, this big drive and it's put into years. And, so, I put, like, our manual in it and any other information. And, we can add, like, links for people to –, like, if someone finds something interesting they could, like, add a link, so, like, research more. And then each meeting, we'll have, like, our notes from, like, the meetings where if someone couldn't make the meeting, they have the meeting notes. And, the committees each have, like, their Google docs too. So, like, say if I wanted to find more –, find out more about some other committee that I am not on, I can just go through their meeting notes and then it adds some more transparency. And then my goal with this, because I started it at my school, but my goal with LYAC is to where the new members, they can kind of, like, if they are confused about something or wanted to see in the past what LYAC did, they can easily do that. Thank you.

Judge Manning: Senator Mizell, you had a question, I believe, of the speaker?

Sen. Mizell: Well, no, actually –.

Rep. Freiberg: I had one, but, you know.

Sen. Mizell: While I've got the opportunity, I, I would love for you all to share –, Megan, if you would share –, ah, because I was reading this script and I loved it. So –, so that we could, uh, have some, uh, idea of what they're doing or –, or how you're –, how you're doing that.

Ms. Bella: So, um, well, I guess somebody else is going to talk about what the ideas we have right now and then also about the committees that they are, like, working on right now. So, the report that you guys have are actually from last year. So that's last year's group, uh, which a few of them are actually –, were on the council last year too. Uh, but last year, we kind of got interrupted so we introduced a bill that was about Purple Star schools and then it never actually got heard in committee because the session kind of got on hold. So, I mean, hopefully, this year we will be able to go full forward with an idea and bring it actually through the legislature instead of at the introduction phase. But, I mean, I guess, whatever –, whatever question you have specifically –, if you have anything else or –.

Judge Manning: Rep. Freiberg?

Rep. Freiberg: My –, my question was also to you, uh, and that was –, you said you have thirty-one members.

Ms. Bella: Right.

Rep. Freiberg: Uh, and they fill out a, uh, request to be a member and so forth. They apply. Do you make any effort to select students from throughout the state so that all districts in the state are represented?

Ms. Bella: We do. So, the way that is done is they are organized by congressional districts.

Rep. Freiberg: Okay.

Ms. Bella: There are six congressional districts and then we choose the top three scores from those. And then the rest of the members are the top scorers overall from the entire state as a whole.

Rep. Freiberg: And, what grade levels are involved in this?

Ms. Bella: It's strictly high school. So, you have to be entering –.

Rep. Freiberg: You –, you could be a ninth grader. You could be freshman.

Ms. Bella: Yes, ma'am.

Rep. Freiberg: Okay. Thank you.

Ms. Bella: Yeah.

Rep. Freiberg: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Judge Manning: Did you complete your comments?

Miss Coyle: I did.

Judge Manning: You're welcome. Next?

Testifying and providing information to the committee was Grant W. Suire, representing Legislative Youth Advisory Council.

Mr. Suire: Good afternoon. My name is Grant Suire. I'm a senior at the Episcopal School of Acadiana in Broussard and I'm a second-term member on LYAC and this year I'm serving as

president. I'm excited to be here today. I'm going to talk to you about our October Zoom meeting. Um, one thing that we realized in the scope of this whole year –, and everything that's been going on and having to quarantine for a while –, and, uh, one of the things that we noticed was that Zoom actually wasn't necessarily a vice, but that we could actually meet more frequently now, um, and have more productive sessions now that nobody had to drive necessarily from Shreveport, like, uh, a couple of our members do. Uh, we could actually meet over the phone and –, and over the computer and discuss ideas more frequently. Uh, so in October, we took advantage of that and held a full three-hour meeting. Um, and, uh, we have –, we had an agenda laid out for it. Uh, we decided that we would make Zoom meetings more about, uh, having ideas and discussing our plans rather than, you know, at our normal meetings, usually we have speakers and –, and give us a few comments, and we have a little bit of an Q & A. Uh, but this time we –, it –, it was almost purely brain storming and I think it –, we really had a productive session. We split up into committees, uh, I think for the second time and Molly's going to give you a few words about the committees later and explain to you, uh, how we split them up and, uh, what direction those are going in. Um, I –, I did want to say, uh, that, uh, Mr. Wright and, uh, Ms. Roshto, I know that you said you had some experience with, uh, youth in government and –, and the YMCA. Ms. Roshto, obviously with the YMCA –, is a non-profit. It's one that is very active in our schools in Louisiana. And, I just wanted to say, you know, several of our committee members this year and in the past couple of years have been, uh, state officers for Youth Legislature and for Model UN so obviously the programs go together actually, uh, very well and they both have a similar mission. So, I wanted to thank you for your time with that and say that those programs, uh, are very, very, uh, influential in our schools around the state and ought not be over looked because, uh, our state's youth and government program is –, is very robust and it's due to, uh, work with people like you. So, thank you for that. Um, now I think, uh, I think Molly's going to come up and talk about committees. So, thank you very much.

Testifying and providing information to the committee was Molly McNulty, representing Legislative Youth Advisory Council.

Miss McNulty: Um, my name is Molly McNulty. I am a second-term member on LYAC. Last year I served as the secretary and this year I am the vice president. Like Embeth and Grant said, and the committees like Senator Mizell was asking about this year –. So, to determine committees, basically we had this big brain storming session and everyone kind of shouts out what issues they think are most important among Louisiana youth and then we kind of vote on those. We do tallies and we come up with the top four or five. And so, this year, we came up with education, environment, criminal and social justice, and mental and youth health. So, within the Education Committee, we split into kind of two sub-groups. Sorry, my paper –. And so, the first sub-group is focusing on special education specifically and applying for some type of federal grant to either fund, resource, or, like, some type of special education program to provide

extra training for special education educators. Because right now, the training required for traditional teachers and special education teachers are the same and we feel like it should not be. The second task of the Education Committee is working on local corruption within school boards and where that money goes. And so, maybe doing, like, a resolution to do, like, a case study on that within some Louisiana parishes. The Environment Committee is researching single-use plastic reduction ideas for businesses and also, like, a sustainability award idea within schools to kind of promote recycling and things along that nature. The Criminal and Social Justice Committee wants to focus on the implementation of anti-racist books in curriculums even though curriculum changes are very difficult so, right now, we do have books like "Huckleberry Finn" and instead they want to promote books that have kind of anti-racist teaching about how to fight racism at a very age young is what they are looking into. And then, the Mental and Youth Health Committee wants to ban corporal punishment within schools and ban conversion therapy in minors. These are two very big issues, but they are also very important and so I hope everything gets done and then Ashton is going to kind of expand upon that, I think.

Judge Manning: What school are you from?

Miss McNulty: I am a senior at C. E. Bird High School in Shreveport and I represent Congressional District 4.

Judge Manning: Thank you. Yes, Ms. Davis has a comment real quick.

Ms. Davis: Some of the issues you're talking about we're –, of course, the board is dealing with. Mental health issues is a priority we've dedicated a lot of funding this year as –, in response to COVID and how that has affected the youth, uh, in particular. And, we also have several advisory councils and I wanted to recommend that we have a Special Education Advisory Council that reports to BESE and we have an Environmental Education Advisory Council that reports to BESE and we advertise those meeting dates. If you want to bounce some ideas off of them that might be a good time to attend those meetings and –, and bring forth your comments especially about your teachers being, uh, being certified –, or prepared in the same way. And, a BESE member chairs that committee. You could also speak with them individually. So, I'm just giving you some thoughts about how to prepare for the session. Maybe get some good feedback.

Miss McNulty: Yes, ma'am. Thank you. We were –, actually the Education Committee, particularly the Special Education Committee, has about a million questions about whether we should pursue this program or this resource idea when it finds a grant. And so, we have, like, seven of ya'll picked out that we were going to talk to afterwards about which way we should continue our grant proposal and which way we should go forward with that. If anyone has any

any input, um, I think, four of us here are on the Special Education Committee and that would be very helpful.

Judge Manning: Great. Wonderful. And, we have one remaining person here to speak?

Testifying and providing information to the committee was Ashton Lee, representing Legislative Youth Advisory Council.

Mr. Lee: Hi. I'm so happy to do that. I'm part Italian so I move my hands a lot. So, having a mic in my hands, I'll be talking like this the entire time. Uh, so, like Molly said, uh, I'm -, I'm a part of the subcommittee on Education so that's Louisiana, uh, Corruption in School Boards which my school finally have that, but, like, we are evident -, very evident in our LYAC members that we do have a lot of that. So, if there's somehow we can approach that, we are definitely going to try to approach that. Louisiana is definitely known -, I did a whole social studies project on Louisiana corruptness. Uh, so, it was very fun to find out a lot. Uh, but like Molly said, uh, we have certain legislation ideas and our year was cut short last year due to COVID, uh, many circumstances. Many things were cut short. Uh, but the legislation we're producing this year, uh, we tried to get a step farther. So, last year and years before usually, you know, we try to pursue one piece of legislation. Uh, you know, one main bill. Easy. We put all our minds to it and said, you know, let's go farther than that. Let's do something better and a lot of our candidates or officers even said let's go farther than that. So, instead of this year, you know, having committees, uh, that are there and have the ideas and produce ideas, let's actually have legislation come out of those committees so we have multiple pieces of legislation possibly getting passed and if they are not passed these are, you know, brain storming ideas for the adults of our state. Because, you know, everything that gets done, you have to get moving first to get it done. You know, you have to start some kind of discussion, some kind of idea. Uh, so we have multiple, uh, like avenues of legislation that we are pursuing like Molly said. This year -, uh, and one of the main bills that we are looking at right now -, which is actually a bill I proposed which I think it can get passed and I really hope it does. That will be really cool as a sixteen year old having, you know, legislation passed already under their belt, uh, as a person who loves politics like myself. So, the bill would explore -, intellectual diversity bill. So, this bill has been introduced in five states and passed in two states and passed in one Senate -, state Senate and one State House. Uh, so, what this bill addresses is youth civic engagement, the main purpose of this -, uh, commission and our advisory council. Uh, the intellectual diversity bill, like, passed in South Dakota addresses mainly, uh, colleges, but I'd like to expand to high schools in Louisiana, uh, because many times in Louisiana we say, you know, we're last in this, we're last in that, and we're last in this. And, it's just, like, you know, let's lead in something. You know, let's lead in youth civic engagement. So, I introduced this bill idea that will allow for every month, the -, uh, a club or a committee created by the, uh, school -. The, uh, schools themselves would



host a public forum among students to discuss focal ideas whether that be, you know, gun control, abortion, uh, environment, education spending, mental health. Whatever it may be. The big issues of the day. Election integrity. Uh, they can have those discussions because we do have those programs like Youth and Government, uh, and we have political science clubs and we have Young Republicans and Teenage Democrats of America. We have those clubs. But, they're there and they have their own section. But, what if we created a system that allowed for those Young Republicans and those Teenage Democrats to come together in a public forum that would include the youth. Not just for people who are a member of those, you know, those clubs, but every member. Maybe somebody who doesn't have a chance to because I have soccer practice on Tuesday so I can't go to the meeting. This bill would allow for every month, there will be a set date for a public forum, uh, that would be open to everybody, uh, among the youth and the students of that school. It will allow them to open discussions about any issues that they have or discussions of –, about the school. It could either be about the school or about political discussions. Because, what we have today is a big problem with –, when we look at TV all we see is arguing. Uh, and, what we are trying to do is train the future youth to show, you know, our future generations that that's not all what politics is. I mean, example, I ran against Grant for president, and me and Grant are best friends. Like, we're the bestest of friends. Like, we really do not care. Like, that's something that you don't see a lot. There's so many grudges that people hold today. Uh, so, what this program does, the intellectual diversity bill, is teach a kid –, teaches kids at the high school age that –, and I want –, and college, that you can have these open discussions without having hate or having a grudge against somebody because we're all human. We're all, you know, imperfect. Uh, so, it allows us to exchange ideas. And, I've changed my mind on so many issues. Had so many different perspectives by having conversations. And, a lot of people just doesn't know –, don't know how –, how to have a conversation. So, this bill, uh, if passed would allow kids to have a conversation, train them to, and would teach the future youth or the future generations of the world, uh, how to get things done without bickering. Um, I also have something else to talk about so if ya'll have any questions towards that I'd love to answer them or comments, of course.

Judge Manning: Before we move to your next topic, let's invite that –, any, uh, other questions or comments? Representative Freiberg?

Rep. Freiberg: I have two. I have, uh, a question and a comment, or comment and a question. Number one, have you tried to pilot this at your own school?

Mr. Lee: Uh, yes. I go to Hammond High Magnet School, uh, which has now eighteen hundred kids this year and I tried to start, uh, Teens Republicans and then I went on to possibly starting Youth and Government. But, of course, it got cut short because our year had got cut short. Uh, I tried starting it. It's complicated to get it started, uh, when, of course, you're focusing on COVID,

uh, for our school. But, this –, I just –, uh, I haven't truly gotten it started among all kids because this year we couldn't do any new clubs at our school because our school's, like, you know, we have to get our own situation, you know, together before we are able to expand on to other things. Uh, so, we haven't got a club per se or a committee per se to open up discussion, but I think this bill idea, uh, if it goes through would allow for schools who never have to –, inde –, you know, independently they'll think of it, but it'll allow for schools to say –, the legislature to say we want these open discussions. Like, we're no longer saying COVID is going to stop, you know, the government from going or politics or issues to –, you know, there's still going to be racism there if there's COVID. There's still going to be environmental issues if there's COVID or whatever the situation might prevent, uh. So, uh, this will allow the legislature to say, hey, we know there's situations, but we came back during COVID because we had to get stuff done so you should have these public forums to allow these kids to get these educations that's very needed education even during troubling times.

Rep. Freiberg: Uh, I would recommend you try to pilot in some of your schools. Maybe you have someone, uh, in your organization who can do this. I can tell you this is a much more complex, uh, issue than appears on the surface. Uh, I think it's a great idea, but when you begin to facilitate these kind of conversations, you really need an expert in the room who knows how to facilitate this kind of dialog and I think that's really important. And, that's why I would encourage, uh, attempting to pilot this in some schools before you brought it, uh, to the legislature for consideration. Uh, and I'll –, I'll –, I'll hear what you have to say, uh, but before I –, I leave, I want you to know that –, um. School board corruption. I didn't know we had school board corruption, uh, anymore. But, uh, if you say we do, maybe we do. Uh, one of the bills I've been considering, uh, proposing for next year, uh, as a past school board member here in East Baton Rouge Parish, uh, is when I was president I tried for total transparency with the school board. That was one thing I worked very hard towards and I'd like to see an open checkbook kind of transparency for all of the school boards throughout the state. Uh, and if it's just a pilot for the first year, it's a pilot. That's the kind of transparency I think if we had, uh, we would prevent some of the corruption you may be speaking of. I don't know if you know what I'm talking about, but that is, uh, a digital format that anybody can go into and see how every single penny, uh, of money is spent. And, uh, that is something that –, that I hope to pursue in the next session. But, I would be interested in your comments if ya'll tried to do something similar at your school.

Mr. Suire: Yes, ma'am.

Judge Manning: Just –, just one second. So, this is Mr. Sire.

Mr. Suire: Suire.



Judge Manning: Suire. Thank you.

Mr. Suire: Yes, sir. I –, I'm from Crowley. We pronounce a little different over there. Um, I –, last year as a junior, I actually compiled best practice research and, uh, drafted a proposal to, uh, create a similar program to what, uh, he's proposing at my school. Uh, the trouble is that with the –, in come –, of the pandemic and, you know, club time being reduced, uh, drastically and, uh, the –, the way that my school did it, I actually go to a private school, so, uh, I can't vouch necessarily for the –, uh, for the program in a public institution, but, uh, my school is private. It is much smaller and even on our smaller scale we had to, uh, reduce club time a lot and actually schedule specific blocks of time for each club to meet whereas usually it's much more fluid. And so, I think that in an environment where we're a lot less compressed than we are right now, um, I think that this is absolutely doable and I –, I'd be open to sharing my written proposal, uh, with anybody who's interested and, uh, I'm sure he –, he's open to sharing his draft of the –, uh, of the legislation with anybody who's interested as well.

Rep. Freiberg: Well, I'm certain that Beth and I would both be, uh, uh, eager to see that, uh, but I would also continue to encourage attempting maybe in the spring, uh, something that would pilot, uh, this idea, uh, or waiting a year to –, to make the proposal.

Mr. Lee: Yes, uh, Representative. In regards to who would run the meeting, uh, to make sure there's, uh, parliamentary procedure or some form of decorum being held at the, uh, hearings, of course, we're teaching them how to. So, what South Dakota has done and it's mostly main –, uh, mainly toward universities, but they've had their political science professors or their history professors or, uh, their club sponsors or any of that such at the high school level, uh, be able to run that. Because those highschoolers, uh, who run those clubs, I mean, Grant has a club at his school, they had a sponsored course for that. Uh, and there's a way for –, of course, there's a way –, I mean, teachers are taught to –, how to control students and I know that's kind of different than political discussions, but, uh, sometimes we do have political immaturity. And, I think that can be addressed through these forums not being held willy nilly, but these forums being, uh, run by –, uh, by the principal or the administrators or the, uh, clubs who are sponsoring it through the schools that they pick –, so choose. Uh, their sponsors having –, uh, of course, making sure it's not a kid having a grudge against somebody or there's some kind of thing going internally on. It's the sponsor there who's totally independent from the discussion who's there to keep –, uh, you know, keep the decorum there.

Rep. Freiberg: Thank you.

Judge Manning: Ms. –, Ms. Davis, you have a question or comment?

Ms. Davis: Yeah. Just a real quick comment. Uh, at our December meeting, we're going to –, and I'm not going to say too much about it, but we're going to talk about some forums that we're going to have in response to a request by our board member Mr. Morris who wanted to have student and teacher input as to the way that COVID has rolled –, you know, come in, and we've rolled out education. So, we are going to have a series of forums and we –, uh, that we have an organization that is going to help us with that. They're going to actually present at our December BESE meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup> so you may want to tune in. You can see it. Video stream that or you can attend and see how they are proposing to have those forums, um, and it may give you some thoughts on how to get it off the ground before –, I mean, I know the legislation is very important, but try it out first like Ms. Freiberg said. And then –, but tune in for that.

Judge Manning: Okay. All right. Well, thank you all for being here and I want to thank you all for your commitment. Did you have another –, someone else to report?

Mr. Lee: I was going to –. Have this idea, uh.

Judge Manning: Just one –, just one second. Senator Mizell?

Sen. Mizell: Uh, yeah. I –, I know we've got a lot to cover, but I –, I –, I couldn't help but think with –, with the comments that were made. Um, we –, we had legislation, uh, to protect freedom of speech on the college campuses because there was such a limitation being placed on the college campuses. Uh, traditionally, there would be a speaker's corner where, uh, you could just kind of go and –, and get things, uh, laid out on –, on whatever belief you had about whatever issue. So I –, I would –, I would think that an opportunity for you all would be, uh, at, uh, a school board meeting or –, or some opportunity where there could be, uh, a point/counterpoint without having to have an official group set up or –, or where you –, because you are going to have to have, uh, a sponsor. I mean, uh, everything I've ever tried to do with the school requires a sponsor which is a real commitment. But, if you –, if you showed your seriousness at a school board meeting and your adult behavior in making your point –. I –, I think it's incredibly important that –. Uh, the first high school group I ever spoke to, when I asked what they believed about some issue and they just looked at me. I said you've got to know what you believe in at least as well as why you support LSU. You've got to be able to make your case and I think, ah, we're so busy shouting at each other we don't take the time to make our case. And you're –, you're –. I love what you're doing because it's absolutely what's missing in –, in the world we're in right now is the valid argument. So, but I would –, I would go to my school board members and ask them if there could be an opportunity at the school board meeting even if it's, uh, drink machines in –, you know, instead of fresh fruit. Something that maybe would be valid to –, to the situation and your school system and –, and let them hear the –, the level that you all could engage in. I mean, I –, I don't know, but that's –, I'd love to see that personally.

Judge Manning: Thank you, senator.

Sen. Mizell: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Judge Manning: All right. We do have to move to the presentation that we have from the Department of Education. So, let me ask, uh, Mr. Lee, you had, uh, a few more brief comments. Is that correct?

Mr. Lee: Yes, sir. I had an idea which, of course, can be discussed among ya'll selves after it.

Judge Manning: Well, let me ask you. Has the idea been presented and flowed through the proper committee structure within LYAC?

Mr. Lee: Um, is this –, this is an idea. Yes, it has been, uh, brought up to multiple members. Uh, and it has –.

Judge Manning: Well, I understand it may be brought up to multiple members, but has it been thought through and worked through your committees? Uh, uh, the Legislative Youth Advisory Council?

Mr. Lee: Yes, sir. It has. Uh, this is an idea –. So, due to COVID, our year was cut short last year, uh, and, our –, our beginning, uh, first day, that was supposed to be –, we normally go to two-day orientation, was, uh, also cancelled this year due to COVID. The idea is –, is that members like myself who according to the commission –, I –, after this term, I'm done because this is my second consecutive term. I'm a junior. Uh, the idea is –, is that because our term was cut short last year and because our, ah, legislative idea wasn't even heard because it was deemed non-essential which we understand why, uh, but if there's a –, a bill, there's able to –, for the members who are on this year who are serving their second-consecutive term to apply for a third-consecutive term. Just, you know, the members who were on there last year go a third-consecutive term because our year was cut short. Uh, and we weren't able to accomplish everything we were –. And I understand if it's not possible, but I know with COVID if we were able to give everyone a second chance that we could have, I know that we would. So, this is just an idea that members who were serving like myself who are on their second-consecutive term could serve a third-consecutive term, uh, because our year was cut short. Uh, so, thank you for your time. I'm from Hammond High by the way, Loranger really, but Senator Beth Mizell's district. So, thank you for your time and the honor of selecting me to serve on this council for a second year.

Judge Manning: Thank you, Mr. Lee. Thank you, Grant, as president. I also want to thank on behalf of the commission each one of you for your commitment to the work of the Legislative Youth Advisory Council and congratulate you on your leadership roles within the council. We'll look forward to hearing more from you in the spring.

**WITNESSES PRESENT:**

**Information Only:**

Embeth Coyle, LYAC, Shreveport, LA  
Ashton Lee, LYAC, Loranger, LA  
Molly McNulty, LYAC, Shreveport, LA  
Steffek Rainey, LYAC, Baton Rouge, LA  
Grant W. Suire, LYAC, Crowley, LA

**C. Civic Education Events Calendar: Peggy Cotogno**

Judge Manning: We'll move now to our next, uh, presentation. Ms. Cotogno, you are going to present to us an update on the Civic Education Events Calendar. As you may recall last November, we approved on a trial basis, uh, the study and implementation of a Civics Education Events Calendar in compliance with the legislative mandate for the work of the commission. In the spring, Ms. Cotogno, uh, presented to us some, uh, updates with regard to that, uh, calendar, and she's here to give us more updates.

Ms. Cotogno: I feel so short. Okay. Um, at the last meeting, I promised to furnish the commission an image that could be made into a clickable icon or a button link, uh, to the calendar. In your folders is a copy of the –, of the icon that we have designed. Um, we have all agreed that a disclaimer statement was imperative and I believe Jerry Guillot from the Senate side is –, is working on the verbiage. Inserting the disclaimer to the calendar link is the last thing we have to do before we can make the calendar available to the general public. Uh, at that time, we will e-mail each of you the icon image and the link that your web master will need to make the image a clickable icon. It is very easy to make an image a clickable one. Uh, by the way, the calendar that I will be able to show you in a minute is live right now for the purposes of this meeting. I will turn it off as soon as I get home. We don't want it visible to the public until we have worked everything out. I just mention that because after today you won't be able to see it. Um, did want to say there has been some discussion about having a committee to review all calendar events before there were posted. Due to a lack of activity due to social distancing, I don't think that is necessary right now. All the events being posted are long-term public education events. Hopefully that will change soon and we can address the review process then perhaps. And, um, if I have any doubts about a post, I will contact the calendar subcommittee which currently consists of Shan, Beth Courtney and I. I would like to periodically send an e-

mail request to commission members to view the calendar and if they have any suggestions, concerns or questions about what is on the calendar we can address that way. Um, there was also some discussion on obtaining permission from the event holders before posting on the calendar. It is the subcommittee's opinion that we do not need permission to publish events that are already published on the internet because they are already public. Right now, almost all if not all of the events posted on the calendar were obtained off the internet so they are already public. Anything that is not public, we will obtain permission to publish. Uh, I would like to say that for the next twelve months I would be happy to volunteer to serve as the manager of the calendar. And by that, I mean I would be responsible for uploading all the events to the calendar. This gives me time to work out any glinches -, glitches that might surface. So, I -, would you like to see the icon? It should be coming up real soon. I have it in front of me. It's there. Okay. So, you see it. It's right on -, it's on the, uh, you know, our commission's website. Home page. Sorry. And, all you have to do is click on it and it will go straight to the calendar. You notice -, I don't know if you need to see -, if you want to see any of this. You know, it's -, um, it's exactly the one that we did before and I was showing you, you know, how it works. But, you click on it and then you click again and you're going to see -, you know, this is Public Square for instance. The Public Square's show on elections. So, just about everything has, uh, uh, a link. So, all we're doing is putting the event and the date and the link to, you know, the, uh, to the program itself. How do I get back to where I was?

Judge Manning: And while, uh, Peggy is navigating that, just as a reminder to our commission members, perhaps some of you were not with us last November, but we adopted -, the commission adopted a protocol and procedures for how the events would go to be posted upon this website, the format that the sponsoring organizations would have to follow to enable the event to be published, and again this is on a trial basis. Uh, this is one of the requirements set forth by statute, the enabling statute that created the Commission on Civic Education -, is one of the requirements that we put together a, uh, civic event education calendar as a clearing house for civic events, uh, opportunities around the state. So, we are -, I'm -, I'm thankful to our subcommittee for their hard work in finally bringing this to fruition.

Ms. Cotogno: Okay. I'm back on the website and you can see, uh, the menu at the top is "Resources" and you can see the calendar is there and it will also -. I don't know if the link is working yet. Yeah. Yeah it is. There you go. All right. So where we are, we're just waiting for the disclaimer and then we'll be set to go. And, I think, uh, oh, yeah, I did want to say that almost all of the events that are currently on the calendar were recommended to us by Megan on behalf of her LYAC students. A big thanks to Megan and her LYAC team. They're awesome. All right. Any questions?

Judge Manning: Any questions of Peggy regarding the calendar? Again, thank you, Peggy and thanks to members of the committee for their hard work.

## VII. PRESENTATION

### COVID-19 Impacts on Education

Judge Manning: We'll now move –, we invite, uh, Ryan –, Ryan Gremillion to come forward from the Department of Education. He'll be presenting to us on the topic of "COVID-19 Impacts on Education" and delivery of education within the state of Louisiana. Thank you, Ryan.

Rep. Freiberg: While he gets started, I want to go back and ask Megan a question. Uh, the –, the young man who suggested a third term after two years. Uh, I don't know. I assume that, uh, this youth council is in statute?

Judge Manning: It is.

Rep. Freiberg: Uh, is –, do you know of a way that if we wanted to give, uh, these students another year, uh, what would be the process of doing that? You're talking to a newbie again, so.

Ms. Bella: That's okay. To be honest, I –, I'm not exactly sure how you would do it temporarily because it is in statute saying that you can only serve two-consecutive terms. So, I guess, I mean, you would have to change the statute.

Rep. Freiberg: Oh.

Ms. Bella: Yeah, even if you tried to do it temporarily –, I'm not a hundred percent sure.

Rep. Freiberg: How could we waive, uh, it for –?

Judge Manning: Just one second, please. If you would like to speak, please push your button. Ms. Taylor?

Ms. Taylor: I –, I'll waive because I actually want to speak on –. I had, uh, something else I wanted to say, not on that. This here.

Judge Manning: Not on this particular point?

Ms. Taylor: Right.

Judge Manning: Okay. Ms. Davis?

Ms. Davis: I was just asking when would that be relevant to the extension of the year. I mean, you don't need it right now, right? I mean, does it –, do you need it at the end of the year?

Ms. Bella: Yeah. I guess the complicated part is –, is, like, so the applications open in January. It ends in March. I mean, session doesn't start until April and they would be –, like, these students would be impacted by that. So, I'm not sure if it's even possible because it would be –.

Judge Manning: Just one second. Representative Freiberg?

Ms. Bella: Right.

Rep. Freiberg: I –, I was just going to say maybe they could be in some kind of, uh, unofficial, uh, advisory role to the new –. I see what you're saying because we wouldn't be in session –

Ms. Bella: Right.

Rep. Freiberg: – before you would be selecting new members, but, it was a, uh, good idea.

Ms. Bella: Yeah. Which –, I mean, definitely an advisory role, I don't see why that would go against the statute and we could look into that to have like a temporary advisory position available.

Judge Manning: My suggestion, Megan, would be that you put the suggestion in writing so it could be, uh, vetted and we could present it to our commission members who are members of the legislature to make sure that they would feel that would comport with the intent of the statute.

Ms. Bella: Okay. That sounds great. Thank you.

Judge Manning: All right. And, Ms. Taylor, you had a question or comment on –.

Ms. Taylor: Yes.

Judge Manning: – before we leave this topic?

Ms. Taylor: Yes. I have a really quick –, uh, and I want to get to this next presentation, but, uh, what I wanted to say to –, to the speakers, the young people who are on LYAC, what you said today. So, I really want to commend you on –, this is a very difficult time as far as COVID and



your time has been cut short and everything's changed, but your use of technology and your really leaning in and doing the Google Docs so you could all communicate better. Actually having more meetings, uh, because you don't have to do the traveling and have the expenses. And really, finding the, uh, finding solutions, um, and expanding on them. It's – it's really, really great and I just wanted to make sure that you guys, uh, are commended on that. And, and great job with, uh, really sort of leaning in to all of the negative things instead of letting them define you.

Judge Manning: All right. Thank you, Ms. Taylor. So, Ryan, I will turn it over to you so give us an update on the COVID-19 Impacts on Education.

Mr. Gremillion: Good deal. Uh, I'm –, I thought Shan was going to be here to –.

Judge Manning: She'll be right back. Her purse is still here so –, hasn't left.

Mr. Gremillion: That's fine. Uh, I can start without her. Uh, just to give you all some historical context. Uh, on March 13<sup>th</sup>, our –, our school year was abruptly shut down. Um, subsequently, the governor suspended assessments which is in, I believe, R.S. 17: 24:4, uh, for this school year, uh, effectively ending the school year for all practical purposes. Uh, shortly thereafter, ah, he instituted the Resilient Louisiana, ah, Coalition or Commission, I don't recall, uh, but our team was a part of that group on the K-12 and early childhood education subgroups. Uh, we worked with them for the better part of two months to, ah, develop a path forward for implementing a –, a plan that would work for our 2020-2021 school year. Ah, ultimately, ah, that resulted in us, ah, drafting emergency policy in July of 2020, ah, consistent with the CDC guidelines as far as, ah, reopening schools in a safe fashion. Ah, our office did this in the middle of, ah, turning over about a third of the BESE Board as well as, ah, transitioning from one superintendent to another and a new superintendent search. So, suffice to say it was a pretty hectic time for us, uh, but I think we did a pretty job in getting these –, these rules, ah, approved in a timely fashion and in a way that would, ah, effectuate the timely and efficient, ah, education of our young people in this state.

Judge Manning: Okay.

Commission member Ryan Gremillion presented a PowerPoint presentation to the commission entitled "Louisiana Believes - Civic Education Commission - November 20, 2020" and a hard copy was made a part of the public record.

Mr. Gremillion: Ah, on September 11<sup>th</sup> of this year just as schools were starting to reopen, ah, the governor moved us from Phase 2 to Phase 3. Ah, that had significant impact on our ability to hold in-person instruction. If ya'll remember in those reopening guidelines, in Phase 1 we were



limited to twenty-five percent capacity on our school buses and in our school facilities. Uh, Phase 2 allowed us to go up to fifty percent and then finally Phase 3 allowed us to go to seventy-five percent. That move from fifty to seventy-five percent really made in-person instruction feasible and that's where most LEA's have lived for their part of the semester. Uh, over the last several weeks, we've seen, uh, uh, a spike in some cases, ah, particularly in our high schools. Ah, and we attribute that to the fact that, ah, they move classes more than our younger people and they're also involved in extra-curricular activities such as, uh, athletics and there's more face-to-face contact with -, with folks from, um, other areas and, ah, we aren't surprised by that. Um, we were somewhat expecting that and I think all in all we've, ah, avoided any significant outbreaks, ah, in our -, in our systems. Uh, going back to those Phase 2 to Phase 3 transitions, the biggest, ah, transitions there were again related to group size, 50%, 75%, uh, in our class rooms and on our school buses. And then, we made some accommodations for, ah, extracurriculars related to band. Obviously, you can't blow -, I was never in band, you can't blow a trumpet, ah, without some sort of covering so the particles don't reach the air so we made some accommodations for our students, ah, involved in those activities. Uh, late September, we reached out to our systems. Um, just a little background, in Louisiana, we have, ah, sixty-four or sixty-nine, ah, traditional LEA's which are attached to parishes with the addition of the City of Zachary, the City of Baker, the City of Central, Monroe, and Bogalusa operate, ah, independent of their parish structure. Ah, and then we also worked with our Type 1, Type 2, Type 5 charter schools around the state, ah, to see where they were, ah, just to, ah, take their pulse, ah, in terms of, um, seeing what they were learning from, ah, virtual instruction, if they needed any, ah, assistance from the department whether it be financial, um, through CARES Act allocations or what have you. Ah, and we learned at that time that 92% of those LEA's had moved, uh, or were planning to move to Phase 3 by the end of October. Uh, that number is -, uh, has risen a little bit. So, almost all of our LEA's including our -, our charters, ah, are in a Phase 3 posture meaning that they can have 75% of students in their facilities and school buses which makes things a little bit easier for them. Uh, the remaining systems, ah, either weren't on -, on pace to reach that, uh, milestone by the end of October or they were one of those six parishes that, uh, were devastated pretty -, pretty badly by Hurricane Laura in late August; those being Cameron, Calcasieu, Jeff Davis, ah, Vernon, Allen, Beauregard. Ah, they've -, they've had some unique challenges related to, ah, the reopening of schools in a safe manner, ah, with -, with Hurricane Laura. Um, a lot of those schools, particularly in Cameron and Calcasieu, missed the better part of September and weren't able to, ah, start their school year in earnest until early October. So, they're -, they're still, ah, experiencing some -, some difficulties, but we're working with them to make sure that, uh, the rest of the semester runs smoothly, and Spring 2021 and beyond is also a seamless transition for them as well. One of the biggest questions we get about, ah, this school year is the learning format, whether it's in-person, hybrid or fully virtual. Uh, what we're seeing now is that most of our schools are in some sort of a hybrid, uh, posture. As you can see, all grades right now, about -, about 4/5's, are -, are in-person, ah, with about 20% being, ah, in a hybrid model as you can

see. Uh, with our —, our youngest learners, they're mostly in-person. Again, they're not switching classes much and not switching teachers. Ah, the —, the risk of transmission's a little less for them. And, as you move up in grade level you will see that, ah, as we get to our high schoolers, ah, they are about one-third to two-thirds, ah, hybrid to in-person. And again, we attribute that to the fact that, ah, there is so much more movement with that population and also with the extracurric—, extracurricular activities involved. Another big issue we've found is connectivity. Ah, whenever you're moving to a —, a virtual or even a hybrid educational mode, ah, connectivity becomes —, um, becomes key. If you don't have high speed internet, broadband internet, um, or devices like an i-Pad or a Chrome Book or a computer at your home, ah, it makes it difficult to participate fully in a Zoom lecture or, um, any sort of, ah, online instructional, ah, delivery model that may be offered by your school. So, as of late October, ah, 29% of the students still didn't have internet connectivity in their homes. Um, to put that in perspective, we have about, ah, the —, the October 1<sup>st</sup> counts haven't come out yet, but you can pretty fairly say about 800,000 students in Louisiana and with 30% without connectivity. Do the math. That's about a quarter million students without connectivity, uh, reliable connectivity. Uh, we've worked with our school systems to ensure that, ah, these —, these students have some sort of —, some sort of short term solution to, ah, address that issue whether it's, ah, through the use of CARES Act funding to buy Mifi's or mobile hotspots, uh, in LEA's, and also, ah, they —, the CARES Act funding to buy more devices, ah, whether they're Chrome Books, iPads, ah, computers, what have you. Ah, it —, it's not ideal. Ah, we're not alone in facing this in Louisiana. This is a nationwide issue. Ah, it —, it seems to, uh, impact our more rural areas and our lower socioeconomic areas in the state more than our urban, more affluent areas. Uh, this is to be expected. Again, ah, all in all, we're probably doing a little bit better job than our peers in the southeast. Ah, but again when you have 30% of your kids who don't have cable —, connectivity when a large chunk of their education is, ah, electronic, that's an issue and it's something we're going to have to do —. I know Senator Mizell has been, ah, on the forefront of —, of increasing broadband connectivity in our state for some time now. And, I think this is hopefully the wake up call that we need to —, to make that investment in —, in this technology for all of our students and all of our citizens quite frankly. Um, we're still engaging with our LEA's to, ah, help them as they move into, ah, the spring semester again. There are so many unknowns with this —, uh, this virus. There's no, ah, reason for us to believe that this won't be the case going into Fall '21, ah, and we have to move into a —, a virtual or hybrid option, ah, moving forward next school year as well. So, it's imperative for us as a department and working with Shan and her board to come up with solutions to, ah, ease that transition if this does become, I hate to say this, but the new normal at least for the, ah, foreseeable future. Ah, school systems used the summer —, this past summer to plan for how their operations would shift, ah, based on the increase or decrease of, ah, infections in their communities. Ah, again, we —, we're seeing some outbreaks, ah, from Zachary. And, we —, we saw a little bit of an outbreak, ah, in our high school last week. So, I think today is the last day for our high school to be open, ah, this semester and then they'll come back in January. Knock

on wood. Uh, but, we're seeing, uh, shake-ups like this all around the state. I know, in Vermillion Parish, Erath, uh, in north Vermillion and in that area they're seeing a little bit of an increase, um, in cases and they're reacting accordingly by shutting down some of their schools. Not shutting down schools; moving –, moving to a virtual option for the rest of the semester. Ah, and I think we'll continue to see that as the winter progresses. Hopefully, ah, this isn't a long-term issue, but we are prepared and we think we have good policies in place to assure that our students are getting a –, a –, a high quality education if they are in fact, ah, learning from, ah, a virtual option. And, the final bullet is we're, ah, in constant contact with the Louisiana Department of Health as well as the Children's Hospital of New Orleans and other national stakeholders to, ah, amend and –, ah, amend our guidance to districts as, ah, the situation progresses with the virus across the country. Ah, we developed a school reopening dashboard. I think we have a slide on it a little bit later on. And, it allows us to track what type of learning students are getting in Louisiana at any given point in time. So, each one of our LEA's, um, are asked to update this periodically to, ah, show how many kids are being taught virtually, how many are being taught face-to-face, how many have, uh, broadband connectivity, how many, uh, are given that connectivity through wireless, ah, access versus MiFi. And then also, ah, if they do have devices, what types of devices they're using to, ah, deliver that instruction. I'm not sure if these links are live, but we can most certainly send you the links to all of these, ah, sites that you see here. I'll try on the next slide actually. So, this is, ah, a sample of what that dashboard looks like. It's a little cleaner than this, but each district would, ah, input this data. We're asking them to do it weekly as their situation changes, ah, and it shows us the percentage of their students that are virtual, hybrid, in-person. Uh, if we were to go down, we would see, ah, by grade level what those, ah, percentages look like. And then also, ah, we have connectivity stats as well, um, in addition to the types of devices that are being used in those districts to deliver, uh, online instruction. And so, this is a –, a slide that shows all of the resources that we've used, uh, or developed over the last several months to assist our LEA's, ah, including our charters, ah, in their reopening, uh, efforts for the fall of 2021 moving into spring, and fall 2021. Uh, you'll see here, the school reopening guidelines for resources. Those are the policies that were passed by BESE in July that outlined, ah, their requirements that must be met by our schools in each phase of the coronavirus, ah, pandemic. Ah, implementing Strong Start 2020 is, ah, our way –, or our guidance showing districts how best to meet those policies that were passed by the board in July. We've got a FAQ. The school reopening dashboard. Let me see if I can open this. So, you would just scroll down from that link and, someone name a –, well, let's go with Zachary since that's where I'm from. All right. Well, it's being really slow. This is our statewide, ah, data. As you can see, it's 940,225 students. That is going to be inclusive of –, of our non-public population is why that number is so high. We've asked non-publics, to the extent that they can, to update this information as well. Um, to date, I'm not sure when this is valid. Uh, I would imagine this is probably valid as of last Thursday because that's when we do our updates. Ah, but, you can see about 28%-29% of our students are still fully virtual. Ah, about 22% are in

some hybrid fashion and only about half of them are fully face-to-face right now and that's statewide. It's going to vary by —, by parish, um, and by individual school even. But, that's —, that's a snapshot of where we are today, ah, in our state. Again, if you scroll down, this is the percentage of students that are being taught in person, hybrid, and virtual by grade level. Um, again, you can see the in-person. It starts to decrease as we increase in grade level. Again, totally understandable. And then, this is our devices, uh, piece. Ideally you'd like to be one device to one child. Right now, we are —. Not sure what that's —. That's not right. The top number is not right, but, right now, we're about .97 students per device. We're right at one to one statewide and you can attribute that to the fact that, ah, received, I forget, Shan, was it about \$380 million in CARES Act funding in the spring? And, we encouraged our LEA's to use that money on connectivity and devices. They heeded that and, uh, we're right at one to one. Um, that helps you on the device side, but if you don't have connectivity a device doesn't do you much good. Uh, so we're still fighting that connectivity problem and we'll probably continue to deal with that, uh, maybe even moving into this session, um, in the spring and —, and beyond. But, uh, as far as devices go, we're in a good posture, uh, but we do need to get that connectivity percentage, um, up quite a bit.

Judge Manning: Excuse me, Ryan.

Mr. Gremillion: Mm, hmm.

Judge Manning: For the benefit of the record and those individuals who may be watching this streaming, would you please state the web address that you're showing us?

Mr. Gremillion: It's not a web address per se. It's on the Louisiana Believes website.

Judge Manning: Okay.

Mr. Gremillion: And if you go to our homepage, you'll find this connectivity tool on our homepage so that's [www.louisianabelieves.com](http://www.louisianabelieves.com) and if you type in the search "connectivity tool" this will pop up first.

Judge Manning: All right. Thank you.

Mr. Gremillion: Again, we talk about school issued devices, uh, predominately, uh, Chrome Books. Um, some laptops. Other devices used whether that's a —, um, iPad or some other device. but most of our, uh, devices used by students today are —, are Chrome Books as you can see and we segment that out by grade. Home connectivity. Here we go. Uh, total number of students, and forget about that number on the left, and total number of students without confirmed internet

connectivity is five hundred and, say, 551,000 kids. Um, that –, that's –, that's a big number for us and I'm –, I'm not sure why that number is coming out that way. It shouldn't be that high. Yeah. It looks like we are in the middle of a refresh here because these numbers seem to be a little off. Ah, I would –, I would encourage ya'll to, ah, go back to the previous number that I said of the 800,000 kids in Louisiana, about 30% of those kids are without connectivity. Ah, that would come out to be about 240,000-250,000 kids.

Judge Manning: All right.

Mr. Gremillion: Yeah. And so, that's, ah, one of the tools we're using to track progress in our districts right now and, ah, we'll continue to update this periodically, uh, as more information comes in and even moving into the spring '21 semester and beyond. Again, we've got some guidance for students with disabilities, our English language learners. And then, ah, each one of our offices –, the Department of Education is broken down into seven major offices. Each encompassing a different, ah, task and each office, uh, holds monthly office hours to assist LEA's and, uh, administrators to –, uh, with their questions related to COVID –, uh, COVID-19. And that's the end of the presentation. One thing I would add to Shan's point earlier, we were tasked in October of 2020 at the BESE meeting, uh, repre –, or BESE member Ronnie Morris who represents this area actually, uh, asked us to, uh, get an idea of what lessons we learned from virtual learning from the fall of 2020 such that it would inform the decisions for spring '21 and beyond. Uh, we are working with a third-party group right now that will focus group and survey, uh, teachers, students, and parents over the next several weeks to get an idea of, ah, what worked for them with virtual and hybrid learning, what didn't work. Uh, and we think it's really important to hear back from our students, uh, particularly they're always, ah, the group that is often not considered whenever we're making, ah, decisions at –, at a district level like this. So, it would be good to know what they've learned or what they think worked or didn't work with the virtual learning this fall. And, ah, also, uh, with our teachers that they feel as though they got the professional development that they need and, uh, even our superintendents and other, uh, district leaders, what they've learned. Uh, the idea is that we would survey and focus group those groups, uh, throughout the month of December with preliminary, uh, data arriving back to us by early January and we'd bring that information to BESE in, uh, January at their meeting so about six weeks from now.

Judge Manning: All right.

Mr. Gremillion: And I've one more thing if I could and –, and I'm sorry for not putting this on the agenda earlier but –.

Judge Manning: Well, let me ask, before you –

Mr. Gremillion: Yeah.

Judge Manning: – leave this presentation, Ryan, I think Senator Mizell has a comment or question.

Sen. Mizell: Kind of both. Kind of –, kind of. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I –, I –, I appreciate your acknowledgment of the connectivity problem. It's a huge issue. I mean, and –, and –, and I'm going to publicly say this, uh, for a commitment from the Department of Education for a permanent connectivity rather than these little hotspots that turn into the equivalent of a ball point pen that you pitch. I mean, kids cannot –, I can't –, I have a hotspot at home, Ryan, and I can't watch a YouTube video. So, there's no –, I –, I can't imagine the frustration of a kid who had been a good student trying to sit at home and keep his grades up or staying engaged. So, uh, when the monies come and, God willing, we'll get more CARES Act money, I –, I would love to talk to you all about an investment, uh, for a permanent fix rather than putting so much money into a temporary fix.

Judge Manning: All right. Thank you, Senator.

Sen. Mizell: Uh, and real quick. Uh, do you all know –, the kids that are at home now that used to be in school, do you all know –, their –, you all stay in touch with their parents? Do you know that someone's caring for them all day or what?

Mr. Gremillion: We –, we don't track that.

Sen. Mizell: Yeah, that worries me.

Mr. Gremillion: Yeah.

Sen. Mizell: Thank you. Thank you.

Judge Manning: Representative Freiberg?

Rep. Freiberg: I was just going to ask if you had any sense –. I know in the Baton Rouge area, there have been a lot of schools that are back to all virtual, and I know you said this is October data, do you have any clue as to whether this is happening statewide and people plan to come back after Thanksgiving or after Christmas or what we're looking at?

Mr. Gremillion: Yeah, so, anecdotally we –, we'll hear it, uh, but at the end of the day it's a –, it's a local decision. Uh, we –, to the extent that they're updating their data in here, uh, in this tool,



we can learn, uh, what's going on in a district. We can see if they've moved from, um, fully virtual to face-to-face and back now to fully virtual. We can see that, but there's always going to be a lag as to when they update that information.

Judge Manning: Mr. Wright?

Mr. Wright: Thank you, Mr. Chair, uh, and thank you for the presentation and for all of your work on this. Um, also thank you for the, uh, school reopening dashboard. I'm a fan of —, of data and then I would —, so, uh, love to see that. Um, quick question —, clarifying question. The 29% that you mentioned that don't have reliable internet connectivity, uh, does that include those who are receiving resources like MiFi's which I know are not necessarily the most reliable? But, I was just curious if that 29% was inclusive of that.

Mr. Gremillion: Right. So, the 29% is —, are —, are —, uh, is comprised of kids who have no access.

Mr. Wright: Okay.

Mr. Gremillion: Whether it's MiFi, broadband, uh, regular speed internet. So, those will be the kids who don't have any access to any connectivity.

Mr. Wright: Okay. And so, the —, my follow-up question would be, uh, because we know we have —, we do have some partial solutions with MiFi's, what are the barriers that are, uh, you know, preventing —, that are keeping that 29% where it is? Because I know there's been a lot work with devices and so is it a matter of funding? Is it a matter of liability of the MiFi's? What do the school systems say? Or did you ask that question on the survey?

Mr. Gremillion: Yeah. So, I —, I think in the —, in the early parts of the pandemic that the issue was funding. Uh, now, as we have kids moving back to a face-to-face, uh, setting, it's not as much an issue because they have access at —, at school. Uh, the —, the concern earlier in the school year was when schools were still fully virtual, that 29% meant a lot more. We don't know what percentage of that 29% is face-to-face. I think that's where we should get that. To the extent that a good percentage of that 29% is back face-to-face, it's not as big of an issue. But to Senator Mizell's point, it —, we don't know how long this is going to last and this, uh, connectivity, regardless of coronavirus or not, is an issue that we probably need to address for our young people. But, no, we don't know what part of that 29% are in a virtual setting right now.

Mr. Wright: Okay. Thanks.

Judge Manning: Mr. Shutt?

Mr. Shutt: Yeah, uh, I wanted to bring –, just bring up what –, uh, with regards to connectivity. Uh, one of our largest clients we have is, uh, I think, the only Fortune 500 company in Louisiana, up in Monroe, uh, CenturyLink. And, uh, we place –, uh, I think, in thirty-six states I placed public notice where they go in with the Lifeline program in rural areas, low socioeconomic areas, and they are subsidized with the federal government to bring in broadband to those areas because it doesn't make sense, you know, uh, economically for them to go in and develop those, uh, broadband areas. So, uh, I mean, it's a program –, Lifeline is a federal –, I don't know much more about it other than it –, it might help. Something that maybe Senator Mizell could look at, or something into. Uh, and I have contacts with the people that run that particular program so if you –, you know, maybe point somebody in the right direction. They're not the only internet service provider that does that. I mean, all of them do, so.

Mr. Gremillion: Yeah. And to that point, ah, I believe it was at the August meeting, Shan, we had a group from Lafayette come in. And, uh, Cox has picked up the bill for a lot of this work in the Lafayette area and they're working with One Acadiana which is a, uh, regional economic development group –

Mr. Shutt: Right.

Mr. Gremillion: – to get broadband, or not broadband, but connectivity to all of the students in Lafayette Parish. Uh, again, it –, that's going to vary by parish to parish if you have access to someone who is willing to help you. Uh, but, yeah, any –, any help with that –, some of our LEA's can get to facilitate those conversations with those providers would be very helpful.

Mr. Shutt: It's –, it's infrastructure issues. I mean, they have to go in and –.

Mr. Gremillion: It's not an overnight thing.

Mr. Shutt: It's going to take a long time. That's what I'm trying to get to.

Judge Manning: Mr. Butler?

Mr. Butler: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Uh, I, uh, have, uh, several questions that I have brought back from the Parent Teacher Association. Uh, should I ask those now or should I just ask the one specific question regarding connectivity right now?



Judge Manning: Uh, well, why don't we address the connectivity first. And then –, are the other questions related to Mr. Gremillion's presentation?

Mr. Butler: Yes. They all related to, uh, education. The department and policies and practices and things of that nature –

Judge Manning: All right.

Mr. Butler: – as it relates to the implementation of the education within –.

Judge Manning: Why don't you ask the connectivity question at this time?

Mr. Butler: The connectivity question I have is related to the 29% as well, uh, and whether or not that number is being captured from the school board. So the, uh, superintendent or do the, uh, parents have any input in validating those numbers? And, the reason I'm asking that is I'm familiar with multiple situations where they received hotspots, but they were T-Mobile hotspots and many rural areas don't have T-Mobile connectivity so the hotspots are useless. Not only YouTube, they can't access anything else either. And so, I'm just really concerned that we have many more students affected by the connectivity issue that's being –, than is being represented.

Mr. Gremillion: Yeah, that may very well be the issue and I don't want to dodge your question, but that –, those are what we call local issues. Um, my department and Shan's department, we don't really oversee the –, the day to day operations of –, of what, and the governor's office for that matter, day to day operations of how LEA's are distributing, uh, technology to their students. That could very well be the case. We wouldn't know.

Mr. Butler: Now my concern with that is, you're reporting the numbers to the department, to the BESE Board, and to the governor's office. And so, if your numbers are inaccurate then of course that is no longer a local issue.

Mr. Gremillion: At this time, we don't have any reason to believe our numbers are inaccurate.

Judge Manning: Uh, Ms. Davis, you have a comment regarding that question?

Ms. Davis: I was going to say –, tell them how we got the numbers. And this was, uh, compiled as a request from a board member. And there are many task forces regarding, uh, connectivity and trying to build on that and improve that. That this is going to go forward before them to make some changes.

Judge Manning: Ms. Davis, you are referring to a BESE Board member?

Ms. Davis: Yes.

Judge Manning: You said it was requested at –.

Ms. Davis: I am.

Judge Manning: Okay. Thank you.

Ms. Davis: I'm sorry. Not this board. Yeah.

Mr. Gremillion: So, these numbers are being reported to us by the central office of each LEA. So, what they upload –, they have access to this tool, what they upload to this tool is what we report out. And, we –, we –, ah, we haven't heard that the numbers have –, we haven't heard any complaints that the numbers may be inaccurate, so.

Mr. Butler: Thank you.

Judge Manning: Okay. Any other questions or comments? Ryan, thank you, again for your hard work in putting this presentation together.

Mr. Gremillion: Can I say one thing?

Judge Manning: Uh, yes, sir.

Mr. Gremillion: Few minutes. All it's going to take. So, uh, La. R.S. 17:24.4 and BESE Bulletin 741 which is our general student handbook, uh, requires that all of our content standards be reviewed every seven years. Uh, our social studies standards are up for review, uh, this year and we will be asking BESE in December to approve a plan to review those –, those content standards in the spring of '21, for winter and spring of '21, and we hope to bring BESE recommendations to, uh, their June or August '21 meeting. Uh, these are going to be open meetings. Uh, we're going to go around the state and have these meetings. We encourage all of you to be a part of that process as we –, we review these standards. So, it's really important because they are only reviewed every seven years so we want to get this done right the first time, uh, and we want to get as much feedback as we possibly can. And, I'll be in touch with Megan as well to get LYAC involved in this because ultimately, uh, we want –, ultimately our students are going to learn these standards and we want to make sure they're comfortable with them and have

a seat at the table as well. So, we can be in touch with you all once that plan is approved by BESE in December.

Judge Manning: All right. Mr. Butler, you have another question?

Mr. Butler: Ah, yes, sir. I –, I –, and, sir, uh, indulge me, please. I have a few other questions that several of our, uh, uh, constituents had concerns about –, wanting me to bring forth. One of them has to do with –, uh, to what extent has the department addressed HIPAA and PERPA issues, uh, for this virtual environment especially as it relates to special ed students?

Mr. Gremillion: We follow HIPAA and PER–, uh, uh, HIPAA and PERPA. I'm –, I'm not sure what your question is.

Mr. Butler: Have there been any adjustments to the policies to take into consideration that now –, the information is being, uh, pre –, being discussed and reviewed in a different environment than previously –, that –, than it was previously done? Uh, the concern is, uh, privacy and confidentiality and there are certain environments where there are group settings and if they are, in particular, special ed students, uh, individuals with disabilities, uh, those can create, uh, additional barriers, uh, to them being able to truly receive the educational benefit while also being, uh, respected as far as their privacy rights are concerned.

Mr. Gremillion: Yes, all of our students are still receiving FAPE (free appropriate public education) per IDEA and, uh, especially since 2013, 2014 until now. Uh, we –, we've taken a lot of strong efforts to make sure that all personally identifiable information for our students is protected at all times. Again, not –, I'm not telling you it's not happening, but we haven't heard any complaints on our end. And, uh, we continue to follow all HIPAA laws, PERPA laws and IDEA laws as it relates to FAPE (free appropriate public education).

Judge Manning: Other questions, Mr. Butler?

Mr. Butler: Uh, yes, sir. Just two more if you don't mind. Uh, I think this was highlighted, uh, earlier in the meeting, could you please touch on, uh, any, uh, initiatives the department envisions as it relates to (inaudible due to microphone technical issue) of the students?

Mr. Gremillion: Yes, uh, one of the major pillars of this –, ah, this group that we're working with to bring recommendations to BESE in January –, uh, one of the biggest issues we're looking at are the, ah, the mental health impacts on our students and our teachers who, uh, for the better part of six months were –, were confined indoors and –, and what are the long-term, short-term, intermedium impacts of –, of such a learning environment. So, that's going to be one of the –, ah,

the major pillars of our focus group work and our survey –, survey work and, ah, we'll likely have some recommendations to bring to the board in January in relation to that.

Mr. Butler: Okay. Well, and the last question I'll ask is related (inaudible due to microphone technical issue).

Judge Manning: Mr. Butler, just one second. Your mic keeps going off and I'm not touching it so I don't know why. Go ahead, sir.

Mr. Butler: Uh, as it relates to the educational attainment gap. Uh, do you all have any particular concerns that through this virtual environment considering connectivity, access, mental health issues, uh, other environmental issues that are affecting student learning that the educational attainment gap will be significantly increased during this period of time?

Mr. Gremillion: I don't think so. Uh, I mean, I –, I'll –, I would say that the educational, ah, attainment gap is something that we've always, uh, paid particular attention to. Ah, I think now with, ah, the learning environment that our students find themselves in now, it's even more important that we, ah, keep an eye on that and I think the policies that were approved by the board in –, ah, in July that are being implemented now, uh, allow for the students to get the education that they would have gotten whether it's face-to-face, virtual. We don't see there being any, uh, difference in a face-to-face learning model relative to, uh, a virtual learning model now. Our –, our teachers are trained and equipped to provide all of our students with the type of education they need to, uh, further their educational attainment.

Mr. Butler: Thank you.

Judge Manning: Thank you, Mr. Butler. Thank you, Mr. Gremillion. Any other questions or comments?

## **VIII. CONSIDERATION OF ANY OTHER MATTERS THAT MAY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION**

Judge Manning: Any other matters that need to come before us? Any other considerations? I wish all of you a blessed Thanksgiving. We also want to keep in our thoughts and prayers Tammy Crain-Waldrop who could not be with us today due to a death in her family and we certainly –. Tammy, I know, is participating remotely and she keeps sending me text messages to remind me to follow up on certain things during the course of the meeting. So, Tammy, again please extend to your family our thoughts and prayers on the death of your sister.

There were no other matters that came before the commission.

**IX. ADJOURNMENT**

Judge Manning: Any other questions or comments before we adjourn? Hearing none, the chair will entertain a motion to adjourn.

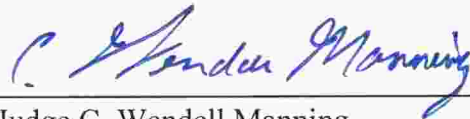
Ms. Davis: (Inaudible)

Ms. Johnson: (Inaudible)

Judge Manning: Been properly moved by Ms. Davis. Seconded by Ms. Johnson. Any discussion? Any objection? Hearing none, we stand adjourned. Thank you.

There being no further business before the commission, Ms. Davis moved to adjourn. Without objection, the meeting was adjourned at 3:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



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Judge C. Wendell Manning  
Chairman

May 21, 2021  
Approval Date