

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE  
 Wednesday, March 8, 2023  
 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM

Committee Members	Present	Proxy	Proxy Name	Absent	Agency/Affiliate/Representing
Andrea Lowe*				X	
Gerlinde Beckers				XX	
Jerrie Williams*				XX	
Jessica Michot*	√				
Jim Mitchell	√				
Karen Collins*	√				
Karen Scallan*				X	
Kelly Monroe*	√				
Nicole Flores		√	Brenda Barres		
Pasquel Nguyen				XX	
Sharon Hennessey	√				
Tory Rocca	√				
Anne Jayes				X	
Ebony Haven	√				DD Council
Carol Lee				X	LDH-OCDD
Bambi Polotzola	√				GODA
Attendees	Agency/Affiliate/Representing		Attendees	Agency/Affiliate/Representing	
Brenton Andrus	DD Council		Kristie Curtis	FHF Acadiana	
Courtney Jones			Rikki David	State ADA Coordinator	
Danielle Ledet			Susan Riehn		
Joann Powell			Liam Doyle		
Staff	Agency		Staff	Agency	
KeAndria Henry	GODA		Alishia Vallien	GODA/SICC	

1. *Call to Order and Roll Call*

2. *Discussion of Legislative Items for the 2023 Regular Legislative Session*

- a. [Create dedicated funding source for Medicaid waiver services for senior citizens](#)  
*(Tony Rocca)*

Andrew Muhl gave an update on HB 645 of 2022 and the purpose of it being reintroduced this year. HB 645 passed with no opposition (103 to 0 votes) and was supported by

GACDA. Purpose of the bill is to provide/create a fund called the “Community Option Waiver Fund” to help adults with disabilities live in their homes and communities. Although the bill stalled in the Senate last year, the concerns were rectified and is starting to build support in the Senate, as well as, a couple of finance members.

Senator Gerald Boudreaux will be filing a Senate version of the bill and Representative Tanner McGee will be filing a house version of the bill. They are asking for support and would like a letter sent to each member of the legislature, from GACDA.

Andrew Muhl will send a copy of last year’s letter and would like for a similar letter to be drafted this year. Letter is identical to the engrossed version from 2022. It is capped at \$50 million. Tory Rocca moved to support this legislation and send a letter like last year. Kelly Monroe suggested scheduling another meeting in order to confirm what was read.

*b. Medicaid coverage of incontinent supplies in DD Waivers (Kelly Monroe)*

The DD Council, LaCAN, and ARC, have been working on this legislation to cover incontinent supplies in the waivers. The purpose would be for those 22 years and older, having a waiver to cover \$2,500 worth of incontinent supplies, such as: diapers or briefs, bed pads, disposable liners and shields, and protective underpads. The estimated cost is roughly \$9.4 million. It will have to be offered to everyone. However, having to have a prescription from the doctor will make some unable to use it. They have also met with LDH and Medicaid, who stated that they can absorb the cost in their budget and offer these supplies without going through legislation.

The fact sheet will not be pulled until a verification of LDH and Medicaid absorbing it into their budget. Medicaid will be composing a letter to address it. Ages 22 and over will receive \$2,500/year for incontinent supplies. Recipients would go through the durable medical equipment (DME) process. The transactions will go between the pharmacies and LDH for DME companies that are not pharmacies. Jim Mitchell stated that the adult changing table meeting discussed providing restrooms with changing tables for adults, which is a related topic. Bambi will send out the recording from the changing table meeting.

*c. Expand [Supported Independent Living Advocacy Program](#) statewide (Tory Rocca)*

Plans to have Governor Edwards to include it in his budget recommendations have changed. They are now working with the legislature to get it passed through HB 1. This program is for home and community based services and is currently operating in two regions. They are currently working on expanding to the rest of the state. Tory stated that

Bambi has been very helpful in the effort to get a legislative sponsor and asked that she follow up with Representative Rodney Lyons to confirm his support.

d. [Changes to the ABLE Act](#)

(Kelly Monroe)

Constituents have expressed wanting to have debit cards but due to Louisiana Able being completely free and there are no fees, it is very difficult to provide debit cards. Recipients will receive one free card and can obtain a replacement card for \$5. The prepaid cards will work the same as debit and credit cards with the exception of being able to use at an ATM or receiving cash back. They are looking to start in September 2023.

Another big transformation will be the age changing age from 26 to 46. This will go into effect in 2026. Bambi gave a reminder that information regarding the ABLE account is linked in the agenda for those that may not be familiar with the account and its legislation. Kelly mentioned that Senator Foil will be running a bill that will consist of a couple of changes that was finally approved, but no bill number has been given yet. This bill will consist of expanding who can be considered the beneficiary upon the account owner's death and to prohibit Louisiana from filing a claim against the Louisiana ABLE Account.

Currently, if an individual passes away, you can roll over the ABLE account money to an immediate family member who also has or qualifies for an ABLE account, which is highly unlikely. Helps you pay for disability related assistance & your income determines your eligibility.

e. [Act 273 of 2017: Captioning in Legislature](#)

(Bambi Polotzola)

The point of contact for the house and senate requested the report that the commission for deaf had a consult draft, in regards to what are the options regarding captioning. Bambi stated that the report was very good and gave some economically feasible options to have captioning. Bambi also informed the committee of the Google's accessibility feature, that allows captioning for anything being viewed through their website, but this is only on your laptop.

The estimated cost for the artificial intelligence (A.I.) captioning would be about \$50,000; this feature would increase accessibility tremendously. A recommendation will be made to the Full Council to draft a letter and schedule a meeting. Kelly Monroe made the motion; Karen Collins seconded the motion. No objections.

f. [HCR14 of 2022: Accessible Voting Task Force](#)

(Bambi Polotzola)

All recommendations made from the disability community passed. Part of that included was a reminder that the task force was created to have a majority of people, with

disabilities, on the task force. The final report consist of 13 recommendations. Representative Willard, the author of the resolution to create the task force, agreed to author legislation to address some of the recommendations.

Bambi will send out the final report. Bambi also credited Ashley Shelton, with the Power Coalition and the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, for displaying their mission of engaging disenfranchised voters, including the disability community, and contributing their expertise.

*g. [SR147 of 2022: Task Force on Virtual Participation in Public Meetings](#)  
(Ebony Haven)*

Amy met with Senator Hewitt to discuss the recommendations from the council and the disability community for parents and self-advocates to be allowed to participate virtually. Senator Hewitt may be leaning more towards the current pilot - allowing public bodies to meet twice a year virtually, and all other meetings must be in person. However, she is considering putting in the caveat for individuals with disabilities, and their parents or family members that sit on boards and commissions, to be allowed that virtual accommodation.

Their next meeting will be held on March 16th, and Senator Hewitt encouraged advocates to attend that meeting; it will also be the first “yellow shirt” day. Kelly suggested that anyone interested in testifying should plan to attend and do so in the meeting on March 16th since recommendations will be given on that day. There also is a “wrap up” meeting scheduled for March 24<sup>th</sup>.

Bambi announced that Lillian DeJean serves on the task force on behalf of the disability community. Bambi suggested that due to a caregiver also being someone who is caring for an aging spouse, parent, etc., the committee should modify caretakers of someone who would qualify for ADA accommodations as a more appropriate word choice since GACDA represents the whole continuum of disabilities. She also stated the committee looked into the component of getting participation from councils that only advise and do not make monetary decisions. These councils operate around hearing the authentic voices of affected people and providers.

*h. Resolution to study medical professionals inappropriately associating physical health problems with mental health problems.*  
(Lilian DeJean)

Lillian has been working with Rep. Miller to create a legislative study resolution to study the medical professionals’ inappropriate associating physical health problems with mental health problems. This study will identify the frequencies and risk factors and potential mitigation strategies.

This is specifically relevant to the disability community because this happens a lot to rare disease patients while they are going through, generally, lengthy diagnostic processes; some takes years to official diagnosis a patient. In the meantime, the patient will still struggle with health issues that are seemingly unexplainable. So, doctors blame them on things like anxiety, or semantic symptom disorders.

Because of these unwarranted assumptions, medical care is compromised. Lillian assumes that this would happen to individuals with developmental disabilities who have co-occurring physical and mental health concerns. Bambi suggested Lillian and Rep. Dustin Miller engage with LDH since whatever agency is doing the study have a lot of control and leverage around what and how this is done.

*i. Additional items may be discussed*

[Click here to access the GODA legislative tracking spreadsheet.](#)

Kelly informed the committee of the bills filed and updated on GODA's spreadsheet.

HB9 and SB12 will be discussed during the education committee.

Next meeting will be scheduled at Full Council meeting. It will be on April 5 or 6.

3. *Public Comment*

Jim spoke about an HCR draft he composed. The HCR will help identify what agencies outside of transportation are spending money on transportation. The idea is for that money to be used with transportation dollars as match money. The language drafted essentially asked for each agency to report the budget item and the amount, and also the spending category and source for the amount of money that they spend on transportation; the commissioner would compile and provide this information to DOTD to put together a report to send to the House Transportation Committee.

Jim suggested the committee take a stand with the Governor regarding a minimum wage bill. GACDA's stance should be, "How the current min wage affects those with disabilities." Kelly suggested putting this on the agenda at the next meeting; Jim agreed. Kelly or Tory will request that the full council give the legislative committee permission to support or oppose legislation.

Bambi expressed condolence and thoughts on Chairperson Lynette Fontenot's passing.

4. *Schedule meeting to discuss items filed for the 2023 legislative session*

Next meeting will be scheduled at the Full Council meeting. It will be on April 5 or 6.

5. *Adjournment*

2:21 pm

Tory Rocca motioned to adjourn. Jim Mitchell seconded. Motion passed.

ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE  
Friday, March 10, 2023  
11:00AM to 12:15PM

Committee Members	Present	Proxy	Proxy Name	Absent	Agency/Affiliate/Representing
Andrea Lowe*	√				
Andrew Kuyoro*				XX	
Beau Ellerbee*	√				
Jamar Ennis				X	
Jerrie Williams*				X	
Jessica Michot*	√				
Jim Mitchell	√				
Karen Collins*				X	
Karen Scallan*				XX	
Marsha Andrews				X	
Nicole Flores	√				
Pasqueal Nguyen				X	
Sharon Hennessey*				X	
Tim Delaney*				X	
Amy Yarbrough				X	LDH-OCDD
Celia Alexander	√				DCFS
Erin Downing	√				LDH-OCDD
Bambi Polotzola	√				GODA
Attendees	Agency/Affiliate/Representing		Attendees	Agency/Affiliate/Representing	
Stephen Barnes	Blanco Center		Margaret Storms	Blanco Center	
Jazmyne Lemar	LCD		Rikki David	State ADA Coordinator	
Kristie Curtis			John Schweitzer		
Staff	Agency		Staff	Agency	
KeAndria Henry	GODA		Alishia Vallien	SICC	

1. *Call to Order and Roll Call*

*Bambi Polotzola*

2. [Granting Unserved Municipalities Broadband Opportunities \(GUMBO\)](#)

*Stephen Barnes and Margaret Storms, UL Blanco Center*

The digital Equity plan is in the drafted phase and will be circulating draft among stakeholders and committee for feedback. The updated version of the revised plan may be available in April.

### 3. Updates from the Statewide Independent Living Council

Bambi gave an update on behalf of Jamar Ennis.

The Council has scheduled meetings with legislators to discuss supporting the following 2023 legislative priorities:

- Fully funding the SPAS Program
- Fully Funding LRS
- Allocating State General Fund Dollars to the three Centers of Independent Living in Louisiana

The Council seeks additional support from interested parties such as GACDA, and other boards and councils who support the independent living movement. Disability Rights Louisiana has offered to write a letter of support of the SILC's 2023 Legislative Priorities. The SILC issued a letter of support for Disability Rights of Louisiana's expansion of the SILAP program (See attached).

The council is eager to work with other boards and organizations to support initiatives that benefit the independent living community. In the spirit of improving accessibility and inclusiveness during its quarterly meetings, The SILC desires to set the standard for best practices relative to the use of technology. To this end, the Council is finalizing a sponsorship with HP to provide equipment and technology. During the February 2023 quarterly meeting, the Council captured footage for its awareness campaign to better educate consumers, legislators, and interested parties of the importance of independent living services and the centers for independent living.

The content captured is currently in post-production and will be available on social media and YouTube. The CIL Directors, SILC Chairperson, and Designated State Entity (LRS) will meet later this month to finalize a working draft of the three year state plan for independent living.

Bambi acknowledged the works and passing of Judy Heumann.

### 4. Updates from the [State ADA Coordinator Office](#) (HB143)

*Rikki David*

Jim inquired about the deadline and suggested the committee should consider looking into it.

JBE 18-08 executive order. <https://gov.louisiana.gov/assets/ExecutiveOrders/JBE-18-08.pdf>

### 5. Updates from the [LA Commission of Deaf](#) (SB 98 / Act 128)

*Jazmyne Lemar*

On March 1, 2023 LCD released a Statewide American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreter Registry in an effort to provide an easily accessible, centralized platform to identify and locate interpreters in the area.

- a. LCD is encouraging all interpreters to sign up to be listed on the registry. If you are working with an interpreter, please feel free to share the registry with them.
- b. In addition, we are requesting consumers, providers to bear with us as we grow the list of interpreters on the registry.
- c. You can visit <https://www.la.egov.com/ldh/LCDInterpreterRegistry> to take a look at the new registry. Also, you can also access the registry by visiting the LCD's website at <https://ldh.la.gov/page/LCD>.

LCD is excited to share this announcement because it will be beneficial to people who are looking to locate an interpreter. It allows you to filter by (location, certifications, availability etc.) to locate an interpreter. You can also view individual interpreter profile accounts by clicking the view profile tab. lastly, there is a growing list of glossary terminology available for review on the registry.

The LCD Interpreter Needs Assessment report is one step towards a strategic goal that states "LCD will establish new systems and standards for ASL Interpreting which define, describe and incentivize new expectations for and oversight of the quality of ASL Interpreters, including in educational settings.

- a. LCD Contracted with a consultant group Innovate Strategies to
  - i. Gather key data from stakeholders on expectations for standards in the states
  - ii. Conduct a comparison of similar frameworks in other states
  - iii. Develop a comprehensive report with recommendations
- b. On March 10, 2023, LCD will release the Interpreter Needs Assessment report to the public.

LCD will be sure to share this report with the committee. If you have any questions or are interested in learning more, we will be hosting a virtual town hall on March 29<sup>th</sup> at 6pm. More information is coming soon. LCD has partnered with the State Fire Marshall to distribute fire alarms to the Deaf, DeafBlind and hard of hearing community on a first come first serve bases.

LCD will send out a signup sheet to the community. Once the signup sheet is ready, we will email the signup sheet directly to the council. We are aiming to send it out at the end of this month. LCD is looking to expand its resource toolkit by creating a centralized platform allowing the community to access resources, best practices on a wide spectrum of communication access. The intent is to help the community navigate the system on how to use an Interpreter, hire an interpreter and more.



LCD would like to hear from council members and the types of resources needed. Please stay tuned for more information! LCD encouraging all interpreters to sign up on the registry. This is an attempt to make the search for an interpreter easier. Jazmyne included a registry link in chat.

Bambi will include information regarding the registry in GODA's April newsletter.

6. Updates from the [Emergency Management Disability and Aging Coalition \(EMDAC\)](#)

*Bambi Polotzola*

Trainings are being done for the deaf community funded by Volunteer Louisiana which is a program within the Lt. Governor's Office.

GOSEP and FEMA are conducting recovery exercises.

Amy Dawson is not with GOSHEP anymore. Ruby Douglas is leading the work around recovery and bringing stakeholders together doing exercises on how to respond.

Mollie is working with Disability Book Week to do outreach. Bambi will meet with Mollie on Tuesday, for details.

Jessica Michot stated Trach Moms has a new building, making it easier to access their supplies.

DCFS has been investing time in mass teams which are coordinating with the entities that our state needs in the moving of people out of shelters. Work is being done around procedures and planning. Bambi Polotzola hopes to give an update at the next meeting.

Dr. Lowe says the insurance companies are not paying properly in her area. Other agencies assist, but there is no follow-up. She stated that President Biden created The Swift Current Initiative Funding but the money from the initiative still has not been released. Agencies should be held accountable for not providing. Jim suggested having someone from insurance to attend the full council meeting in order to speak on this topic.

7. *Public Comments*

Lillian has left GODA. KJ and Alishia are still with the department.

Southern prevented a proposal to the Social Security Administration to study the impact of the COVID crisis which came in parallel with six hurricanes. It did not get funded. A follow-up meeting was held. A follow-up proposal will be written that will update the application for funding to look at disability inclusion and what it means post COVID. It has a lot to do with technology disconnection. Dr. John Schweitzer is asking for support from GACDA. They have about a week to get the proposal resubmitted.

Bambi Polotzola gave the next meeting time.

*Adjournment*

Dr. Andrea Lowe motioned to adjourn and seconded by Beau Ellerbee.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
Monday, March 13, 2022  
1:00 PM to 2:30 PM

Committee Members	Present	Proxy	Proxy Name	Absent	Agency/Affiliate/Representing
Andrea Lowe*	√				
Gerlinde Beckers	√				
Jerrie Williams*				X	
Karen Collins*				X	
Kelly Monroe*				XX	
Marsha Andrews				XX	
Mary Breaud*	√				
Nicole Flores	√				
Pasqueal Nguyen				X	
Tim Delaney*	√				
Brenda Sharp	√				LDH-OCDD
Meredith Jordan	√				LDE
Melissa Bayham	√				LWC- LRS
<i>Bambi Polotzola</i>	√				<i>GODA</i>
Attendees	Agency/Affiliate/Representing		Attendees	Agency/Affiliate/Representing	
Tory Barres*			Brenda Bares	FHF Acadiana	
Ebony Haven	DD Council		Susan Rhein	FHF SWLA	
Staff	Agency		Staff	Agency	
KeAndria Henry	GODA		Alishia Vallien	SICC/GODA	
Lillian Dejean	GODA				

1. *Call to Order and Roll Call*

2. *New Superintendent of the Special School District*      Dr. David Martin

Bambi introduced Dr. David Martin.

Dr. Martin officially starts as superintendent on May 1, 2023. He currently serves as superintendent of the Tennessee School for the Blind, a state special school. This is his sixth year as superintendent. He has been a school administrator since 2010.

Dr. Martin expressed his excitement and extended his willingness to assist.

Dr. David Martin provided his new email address: [David.Martin@la.gov](mailto:David.Martin@la.gov) ; Alishia placed it in the chat.

3. *Discuss Local Special Education Advisory Councils*

N. Flores

a. Topics being discussed during SEAC meetings

- Behavioral health supports
- Paraprofessional shortages
- Teacher shortages
- Suicide
- Bullying

b. Report Collecting (Meredith Jordan)

The state has started communicating the requirements of the updated law. School systems have been made aware that they have to post annual reports on website, and they must be submitted to the state. Districts will be required to submit a link to their posted report. School superintendents and districts will be given a reminder in April. Meredith will also bring local reports to the state SEAP in June. Dr. Beckers created a spreadsheet with SEAC information. It included what all could be found on SEACs across the state.

Alishia provided her local (St. Landry Parish) SEACs topics which consisted of the following:

- Parents having no trust in school system
- Suggested having a peer parent
- Checklist of things that should be checked before students' transition out of high school

4. Related Services Advisory Council

Meredith Jordan

A survey will be created and sent out to districts to determine shortages in special services.

5. Postsecondary Inclusive Education Fund

G. Beckers

The fund was created last year, ACT 682. \$1,000,000 was awarded in the fund. Initial applications for funding went out March 1. Initial grants were up to \$80,000 with a one-to-one match. Enhancement grants are up to \$50,000 with one-to-one match. \$500,000 of the initial million dollars was spent. The fund needs more money. DD Council is advocating for more money to be put in the fund. Programs are still needed in the northern part of the state. Second round of applications went out around March 1 and are due April 14, 2023. The institutions that were awarded have been notified via email.

Applications for establishing a new program

- Louisiana State University in Alexandria
- Louisiana State University and A&M College
- Southern University at New Orleans

Applications for Expanding an Existing Program

- Baton Rouge Community College
- Bossier Parish Community College
- Nicholls State University
- Southeastern Louisiana University

Dr. Beckers reached out to McNeese.

6. Discussion of Legislative Items for the 2023 Regular Legislative Session related to students with disabilities
  - a. [HB9](#) - state funding for education of students with exceptionalities not enrolled in public school Author - Butler

Nicole went over HB9. It creates a scholarship account program. It allows a student to have funding provided in a nonpublic school setting. Specific criteria has to be met. Dr. Laureen Mayfield has concerns about this bill. She believes this will create funding difficulties for districts. ALEC is behind this legislation. She states their goal is to do away with public education. This legislation would divert money from public schools to private schools.

- b. [HB12](#) - Prohibits promotion to fourth grade of students with reading deficiencies Author - Nelson

Dr. Beckers explained HB12. Students with significant reading deficits would not be promoted to the fourth grade. Dr. Beckers is concerned because of the negative outcomes of students who are retained as supported by the research. Dr. Beckers suggested looking at the whole picture. What about attendance, support, teacher shortage, etc.? Do the students have access to high quality instruction?

Dr. Mayfield does not support any legislation that allows students to opt out of testing and screening. Dr. Beckers emphasized using appropriate assessments.

- c. [SB12](#) - Requires AEDs at all educational institutions and athletic events Author - Cleo Fields

This legislation requires AEDs on campus and at sporting events.

## 7. Suicide, Bullying in School

Sherrard Crespo with ViaLink

Discussed adolescent risk factors. Sherrard Crespo shared an informative PowerPoint titled Adolescent Risk and Resources.

Actual deaths resulting from suicide attempts have increased. Knowledge of how to successfully commit suicide is spreading. The information is readily available now. In 2019, the trend was students hanging themselves in the bathroom. Spreading of ways to commit suicide causes an increase in suicide deaths. Teachers and younger people should report this type of content when seen on social media.

Provided risk factors specific to young people which included, brain development and presentation of suicide ideation, bullying, social media, lack of access to mental healthcare, and lack of awareness of resources.

Mental health caregivers and school staff should not ignore risk factors. Students who bully or are bullied are at higher risk of suicide. Suicide and bullying are related. Social media increases thoughts of suicide. There is a balancing act with social media. There is a lack of access to mental health care for young people. Children cannot sign themselves up for mental health care.

There is a lack of access to school counselors in schools. There is a lack of knowledge of suicide and bullying in schools. There is a lack of awareness resources for suicide/bullying prevention.

Resources were also provided. They include the 9-8-8 helpline number, crisis teen text line (833-TXT-TEEN) (833-898-8336), LA Parent line (833-LA-CHILD) (833-522-4453) (available 24/7), Real Talk , 2-1-1 (live specialist), American Foundation for Suicide Prevention - LA Chapter: <https://afsp.org/chapter/louisiana>, request training for suicide intervention, trauma, grief, and child abuse prevention on [www.vialink.org](http://www.vialink.org) , LA Mental Health Coalition - School Based Mental Health Workgroup - email: [screspo@vialink.org](mailto:screspo@vialink.org)

#### 8. Public Comment

Nicole reminded everyone of the Full Council meeting at 1:00 pm Wednesday.

#### 9. Adjournment

Tim Delaney motioned to adjourn. Dr. Mary Breaud seconded the motion. Motion passed. There was no opposition.

Adjourned at 2:12 pm.

Full Council Meeting  
 Wednesday, March 15, 2023  
 1:00 PM to 3:30 PM

Meeting Recording: <https://bit.ly/GACDA2206>

GACDA MEMBER		PRESENT	PROXY	PROXY NAME	ABSENT		
Kathy	Allen	√					
Marsha	Andrews				XX		
Gerlinde	Beckers	√					
Mary	Breaud	√					
Karen	Collins	√					
Timothy	Delaney	√					
Sharon	Delvisco				XX		
Beau	Ellerbee	√					
Jamar	Ennis	√					
Nicole	Flores	√					
Robert	Garcia				XXX		
Kirsten	Gladen	√					
Sharon	Hennessey	√					
Andrew	Kuyoro				XXX		
Andrea	Lowe	√					
Jessica	Michot	√					
Jim	Mitchell	√					
Kelly	Monroe	√					
John	Moran	√					
Pasquel	Nguyen				X		
Mark	Raymond, Jr.	√					
Tory	Rocca	√					
Karen	Scallan	√					
Tabatha	Taylor	√					
Jerrie	Williams				XXX		
Gerald	Boudreaux				XXXXXX		
Malinda	White				XXXXX		
Attendees		Agency/Affiliate/ Representing		Attendees		Agency/Affiliate/ Representing	
Amy Zapata		LDH-OPH		Kathy Dwyer		OCDD SAC	
Ashley Jefferson		LDH-OBH		Kristie Curtis		FHF Lacan	
Bernard Brown		LDH-OCDD		Mylinda Elliot		FHF	
Courtney Ryland		LWC-LRS		Rikki David		State ADA Coordinator	

Christina Martin	LaCAN	Stephanie Carmona	
Erin Downing		Susan Roblow	LDH-OCDD
John Schweitzer	LRS		
Staff	Title	Staff	Title
Bambi Polotzola	GODA Director	Alishia Vallien	SICC Director
KJ Henry	GODA Asst Dir.		

1. *Call to Order and Roll*

*Call Bambi Polotzola*

Dr. Kathy Allen called to order at 1:03.

\*Dr. Kathy Allen served as chair due to the death of Lynette Fontenot.\*

A video of Lynette Fontenot speaking at the 2016 GOLD Awards was shared and viewed. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pgotb83oQhM>

Dr. Allen opened the floor for words of expression for Lynette.

2. *Approval of [December GACDA Minutes](#)*

A motion was made by Kelly Monroe to accept December's meeting. Tabitha Taylor seconded motion. Motion passed.

3. *Committee Reports and Discussions*

*Ø Education.*

*Dr. Gerlinde Beckers*

Dr. Beckers reported on the spreadsheet pertaining to SEAC information. Accessibility to the difficulty of retrieving the information was discussed

Mary Jordan gave a brief overview of the reports being due by the end of May. Dr. Becker's student worker will follow up by the end of June.

Postsecondary Education fund - applications were sent out; the names of grant recipients were listed.

The Roundtable is being held; \$500,000 of the \$100, 000, and 00 has been used.

HB9 - Money would be going to students not enrolled in public school. Recommended not to support.

HB 12- recommended not to support excluding students with disabilities.

SB12 - Cleo Fields - AEDs be onsite at all high school athletic events; all schools should have AEDs on premises

A presentation on suicide and bullying in schools. Bambi provided the link to the presentation in the chat.

A discussion about the new superintendent for the SSD ensued. Bambi discussed the excitement of his hire. He has been focused on engaging the community and stakeholders.

Tabitha Taylor moved to accept education report. Seconded by Karen Collins.

#### *Ø Accessibility*

*Dr. Jim Mitchell*

A team in Lafayette is preparing a plan for broadband inclusion. They are working disabled constituents that are having to pay more in order to get online.

SILC is still developing their plan

Rikki David also gave an update on following up with the state agencies and their reports. Report from LCD - there's a new registry for interpreters. Bambi provided the link to the registry in the chat.

Transportation and Accessibility committees have been combined. Jim suggested reengaging with DOTD since there is a new secretary.

EMDAC - Mollie is putting an initiative that coincides with book week. She is pushing books that include emergency preparedness and webinars providing information that pertains to disasters. The first webinar will be May 4th at noon. Access to assistive technology in disasters will be the topic.

Amy Dawson has moved on to a new position with emergency management.

Jim Mitchell moved to accept education report. Seconded by Beau Ellerbee.

#### *Ø Legislative*

*Kelly Monroe*

Bills have not been dropped yet. Asked for approval from the council to allow the Legislative committee authority to make recommendations to support legislation.

The GACDA Legislative Committee will meet via zoom on Thursday, April 6 at 9:30 to review disability related legislation. All are encouraged to attend. Motion was made by Tabitha Taylor to allow the Legislative Committee to take action on supporting proposed legislation. Seconded by Jim Mitchell. Motion passed.

Since the legislative committee meeting, LDH has provided a letter confirming that they will be able to absorb the cost in their budget and offer these supplies without going through legislation.

Closed captioning - has not been updated; a letter will be written and submitted



ABLE - who can be the beneficiary? Rolled over or clawback; talks with Medicaid; no family member to roll over, expanded to include the estate will be the beneficiary. Representative Foil will be working on behalf of the committee.

DOTD is now offering prepaid cards for recipients. This card can be used like a debit card with the exception of withdrawing money or getting cash back. The card cannot be used as an ATM card and has a one week transaction timeline. ABLE age has been changed from 46 to 26.

Organizations have been working on legislation similar to HB 645. Last year the Council drafted a letter in support. Senator Boudreaux is sponsoring a senate version of the bill and Representative McGee is likely to be sponsoring a house version. Further action is pending until the bill gets a number.

Tory Racca- Disability Rights LA quickly mentioned SILAP (monitors for abuse, neglect, and exploitation) currently offered in NOLA & BR with statewide expansion soon. Kathy Dwyer expressed the need to have a task force that will assist with identifying the issue and figuring out the solution for (ombudsmen) services. Mrs. Dwyer specifically mentioned St. Mary's; Tory advised that a complaint is to be filed with LDH. Disability Rights Louisiana can enter a facility directly, not a private residence; lacks law enforcement powers.

Kathy suggested the need for a task force. Dr. Mitchell suggested an ad hoc committee to identify the problem of repeated violations by service providers. He made a motion to do so and report back at the next GACDA meeting. Seconded by Tabitha Taylor. Next steps are to email Bambi if they are interested in being on committee to identify the problem.

Accessible Voting Task Force - Votes were often split between advocates and agency people. Virtual Participation meeting 3-16-23 in capitol at 9:30.

Jim Mitchell motioned to accept the report. Seconded by Tim Delaney. Motion passed.

#### *4. Update on Employment Initiatives* (including but not limited to [LRS](#), [OBH](#), [OCDD](#))

Courtney gave an update on behalf of LRS.

LRS is collaborating with LDH and OBH regarding an aspire initiatives from the US Department of Labor and Office of Disability Employment Policy. LRS will received tailored and targeted technical assistance to expand evidence-based practices. Select LRS staff will participate in an introductory training with OBH regarding the individual placement and support model for supported employment. Regarding the disability innovation fund, Southern University has confirmed commitment to honoring the sub-contract agreement for all deliverables with project STEM-UP.

The STEM-UP Community-Based Advisory Board met in February and discussed plans for recruiting job seekers and the hiring of career pathway coordinators. Board members volunteered to serve on established subcommittees which include education, engagement, program and evaluation, training and certification and sustainability and

development. The next advisory board meeting is scheduled for April 25<sup>th</sup>. With regards to Human Resources, the Louisiana Rehab Services has 35 vacancies statewide, with 22 of those positions being for rehabilitation counselors. More qualified candidates are needed statewide. LRS recently hired a new program consultant who has replaced Dr. John Switzer

Dr. Ashley Jefferson gave an update on behalf of OBH.

She confirmed that OBH is working with LRS in terms of their IBS Program; will have a little more about IBS when it is time for the department's updates.

OCDD - no one to give updates

5. [La Department of Health](#) updates (including but not limited to [OAAS](#), OBH, OCDD, [OPH](#))

Dr. Ashley Jefferson gave an update on behalf of LDH.

A press release was released on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, regarding some of the programming that LDH have ongoing; specifically with OBH. They are introducing 5 new additional initiatives that are focused on behavioral health of children and their families. They gave this initiatives the title of, "Services from the Start." They are listed below:

- Expanding substance use residential treatment facilities for women and dependent children.
- Implementing early childhood supports and services (ECSS)
- Building the foundation for statewide use crises crisis services
- Treating trauma through the implantation of dialectical behavioral therapy
- Cultivating the psychiatric residential treatment facility

OBH BH Immediate Resources:

<https://ldh.la.gov/assets/oph/Coronavirus/resources/obh/Behavioral-Health-Immediate-Resources.pdf>

There is a save the date for March 29<sup>th</sup>, 9am -11am, in regards to an IPS initiative. There will be a joint effort between capital area and the OBH to provide LPS to adults with mental health conditions.

LDH's Office of Behavioral Health introduces new initiatives serving children and adolescents Press Release: <https://ldh.la.gov/news/6979>

OCDD

Bernard Brown gave an update.

Due to the Covid-19 Public Health Emergency ending May 11<sup>th</sup>, some of the exception that were put in place will also be ending. They are set to end sometime in mid-November. OCDD has been traveling around the state, (Roadshows) to update everyone on what those changes will look like. For those that were not able to join in person, they will be hosting a webinar on March 20<sup>th</sup>, at 1:00pm.

Slides from the OCDD PHE roadshows are at:

<https://ldh.la.gov/assets/docs/OCDD/waiver/OCDDPostPHEListeningSession03092023.pdf>

Roadshow flyer with webinar is at:

<https://ldh.la.gov/assets/docs/OCDD/waiver/HammondLocationPHERoadShowsFlyer.pdf>

OPH

Amy Zapata

Provided PowerPoint (see below)



LCD - SB98 is now Act 128. Registry launched. Increase in funding for hearing aids

Adult Aging Services – no one presented; no updates

6. *State Agency / Member Updates*

7. *Governor's Office of Disability Affairs Conference – July 24-27 (virtual)*

Click here to access recordings from past GODA Conferences: [2022](#) and [2021](#)

Bambi encouraged submission of proposals.

Bambi informed the committee of GODA's conference

8. *Public Comment*

John would like to hear about alternative communication technology. Tim Delaney spoke about portable units with changing tables. Dr. Allen reminded the body the importance of inclusion.

9. *Adjournment*

Dr. Allen adjourned meeting.

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE  
Thursday, April 6, 2023  
9:30 AM to 12:00 PM

Committee Members	Present	Proxy	Proxy Name	Absent	Agency/Affiliate/Representing
Andrea Lowe*	√				
Gerlinde Beckers				XXX	
Jerrie Williams*	√				
Jessica Michot*				X	
Jim Mitchell	√				
Karen Collins*	√				
Karen Scallan*				XX	
Kelly Monroe*	√				
Nicole Flores	√				
Pasquel Nguyen	√				
Sharon Hennessey	√				
Tory Rocca	√				
Anne Jayes	√				
Ebony Haven	√				DD Council
Carol Lee				XX	LDH-OCDD
Bambi Polotzola	√				GODA
Attendees	Agency/Affiliate/Representing		Attendees	Agency/Affiliate/Representing	
Brenton Andrus	DD Council		Kristie Curtis	FHF Acadiana	
Courtney Jones			Rikki David	State ADA Coordinator	
Danielle Ledet			Susan Riehn		
Joann Powell			Liam Doyle		
Staff	Agency		Staff	Agency	
KeAndria Henry	GODA		Alishia Vallien	GODA/SICC	

1. *Call to Order and Roll Call*

2. *Discuss [Legislative Items](#), consider taking positions (support/oppose)*

**HB 1** - Doesn't include FHF nor LaPIE; Kathy Dwyer was concerned with LRS funding. Melissa Bayham says LRS is sufficiently funded at this time. No additional funds are needed until LRS is fully staffed. Motion was made to monitor HB1 by Jim Mitchell and seconded by Tory Rocca. Nicole Flores abstained. No opposition. Motion passed. To ensure that FHF and LAPIE are included in HB1.

**HB 9** - Jim Mitchell motioned to oppose HB9. Sharon Hennessey seconded. Motion passed to oppose HB9 & HB98.

**HB 12** - Ashley McReynolds was concerned that the IEP teams have the abilities to promote the student. This may take away the power of the IEP team. Bambi says as it is this should be opposed because it deflects from the April Dunne act. Tia LeBrun also opposed the bill and gave several reasons why it should be opposed including its effect on ELL students. Jim motion to oppose. Andrea Lowe seconded.

**HB98** - Jim made a motion to oppose bill; Sharon Hennessey seconded motion.

**HCR14 & HB449** - Victoria Wenger spoke on these. HB 449 would allow for training for poll commissioners. It creates an ADA compliance officer to ensure accessibility at poll sites. It is about making elections as accessible as possible.

**HB 553** (Glover) - Requires that a voter with a disability is appointed to State Board of Election Supervisors. Andrea Lowe is concerned with the wording. It was clarified that various agencies from the disability community make recommendations and someone is chosen from these persons. Robin Mayhall suggested that someone not related to a specific group should be appointed. Brenda stated that having a seat at the table will be very advantageous. Tory Rocca said that individuals on the Task Force voted along the lines of people with disabilities supporting nondisabled didn't support. Tory Rocca move to support 553 and 449. Andrea Lowe seconded. Motion passed with no opposition.

**HB 555** - Streamlines and screens for mental health; Tory says the language may change before it passes. Andrea Lowe and Karen Collins say it should be monitored. Tory says, in its current form, it should be supported. Karen Collins motioned to support in its current form. Pasqueal Nguyen seconded motion. No opposition.

**HB 123** (Joe Stagni) - LDH can revoke or deny licenses for nursing homes. Tory says it may undermine holding nursing homes accountable. Motion was made by Jim Mitchel to oppose. Nicole Flores second. Motion passed.

**HB181** - Coroners can decide if someone can be involuntarily committed. Karen Collins motioned to support. It was seconded by Jim Mitchell. Andrea and Tory abstained. No opposition

**HB200** - Allows parents of newborns to object to genetic testing.

**HB213** (Ken Brass) - Jim thinks we should monitor. Ebony Haven said they decided to go against the bill. Jim made a motion to follow. Karen Collins seconded. Motion passed

with no opposition. Brenda Cosse asked if it included school buses. Tory said it does not apply to buses. Andrea Lowe was concerned about private videos that record what's going on at the school. Kathy Dwyer believes we should oppose this law.

**HB291** - Tory motioned to support bill; Ebony Haven seconded

**HB 315** - opposed

**HB328** - Prohibits death penalty from anyone with mental health issues; Ann Jayes motioned to support. Seconded by Sharen Hennessey. Andrea abstained. Passed.

**HB353** - Allows student mental health days. Allows them to make up their work. Karen Collins was concerned with student confidentiality. Students do have to reach out to counselors. Sharon Hennessey motioned to support; Nicole Flores seconded. Passed.

**HB367** - Andrea Lowe motioned to support bill; Nicole Flores seconded motion. Passed

**HB374 & 179**- Increases minimum wage; Anne Jayes motioned to support if reimbursement rate is considered for increasing. Seconded by Jim Mitchell. Karen Collins and Kelly Monroe abstained.

**HB480** (miller) - allow 16 and 17 year olds to work as direct support workers. Karen Collins motion to support. Nicole Flores seconded. Ebony abstained. Motion passed

**HB516** - Add a sticker or decal to license plates if a person with autism is driving. Andrea Lowe moved to support with amendment to add other disabilities. Sharon Hennessey seconded. Jim abstained. Motion passed without opposition. B. Patchett takes issue with law enforcement being able to say there was no sticker if people opt out of having a sticker and something goes awry.

**HB525 & SB39** - Creates a fund to support senior Medicaid waiver; it captures a portion of excess funds for seniors. Jim Mitchell moved to support. Tory seconded. Passed

**HB538** - Provides greater access to early voting sites; there is a cost. Jim Mitchell motioned to support. Seconded by Andrea Lowe. Motion passed.

**HB596** - (Freeman) - State run medical family leave program modeled after 11 other states and Washington DC; the money comes from a payroll contribution model. There is a small business exemption. There is a private plan exemption, if it can be proven that it is offered. Karen Collins motioned to support. Andrea Lowe seconded. Motion passed.

**SB23** - allows early voting to be accessible and conveniently located. Karen Collins motions to support. No second

**SB30** - ABLE Bill - What happens to funds if the person passes? Tory asked will the state notify people of what happens to funds. Kelly gave the options of where you can rollover your funds. Sharon Hennessey motioned to support. Seconded by Karen Collins. Motion passed.

**SB116** - Adds money to Council on Aging; Andrea Lowe motioned to support. Sharon Hennessey seconded. Motion passed.

**SB201** - Brenton Andrus spoke on SB201. LaDDC supports some changes. Kathy Dwyer asked for clarity on who was being considered. Tory Rocca moved to support. Karen Collins seconded. Motion passed.

*3. No Public Comment*

*Adjournment by unanimous consent*