

Council Meeting Summary

April 18, 2024, 8:30 A.M. – 3:30 P.M.
5615 Corporate Blvd. Ste. 300A B.R., LA 70808
LIVE Streamed Via YouTube

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

View meeting transcript [here](#).

MEMBERS PRESENT

Cherie Kelly-Aduli
Mary Frances Avera
Nicole Banks
Patti Barovechio,
OPH/CSHS
Charles “Mike” Billings
Christi Gonzales
Julie Foster Hagan,
OCDD
Jill Hano
Angela Harmon
Meredith Jordan, **LDOE**
Pasqueal Nguyen
Melinda Perrodin
Tony Piontek
Melinda Richard, **OAAS**
Tory Rocca, **DRLA**
Samantha Singletary
Brooke Stewart
Erick Taylor
Renoda Washington
Vivienne Webb
Phil Wilson, **LSU-HDC**
Lauren Womack

MEMBERS ABSENT

Melissa Bayham, **LRS**
Cheri Crain, **GOEA**

Roslyn Hymel
Missey Moore
Tangela Womack,
Medicaid

GUESTS PRESENT

Zandra Ashley
Brain Bennett, Medicaid
Carol Calix
Kristie Curtis
Kristine Dautat
Ricki David
Lillian DeJean
Nicole DeJean
Erin Downing
Liam Doyle
Kathy Dwyer
Myllinda Elliott
Jamar Ennis, **GODA**
Nicole Flores
Julie Folse
Rebecca Fruge
Liz Gary
April Hampton
Leona Harris
Lynsey Hebert,
Transcriptionist
Chanel Jackson
Aisha Johnson

Nicole Learson,
Parliamentarian
Danielle Ledet
Angel Magee
Christina Martin
Ashley McReynolds
Charlie Michel
Caroline Meehan
Eli Melillo
Kelly Monroe
Jacki Pierce
Bambi Polotzola
Kristen Reed
Susan Riehn
Courtney Ryland, **LRS**
Monica Stampley
Michael Thompson
Dr. Marilyn Thornton
Debbie Triggs
Nicole Walker
Mimi Webb

STAFF PRESENT

Brenton Andrus
Rekeesha Branch
Lauren Brown
Ebony Haven
Hannah Jenkins
Bridgette Talley

Christi Gonzales called the meeting to order at 8:38 a.m. with a quorum present.

The [January 2024 Meeting Summary](#) was approved as distributed, by unanimous consent.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT – Christi Gonzales

Ms. Gonzales gave an update on meetings she attended during the second quarter and on committee appointments that were made to the FY2025 Planning Committee and Bylaws Committee.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee met on Wednesday, April 17th and had one recommendation for the Full Council's consideration. The committee discussed the Executive Director's salary and Ms. Gonzales informed the Council that she and the Vice Chair met with the Interim Executive Director, Ebony Haven, on February 21st. During that meeting the Chair and Vice Chair agreed that it was unfair for the Council as the employer to ask Ms. Haven (the employee) to complete research for her own salary. Ms. Haven provided the information requested during the October meeting in the timeframe the Council requested before the January meeting, but the Council was not able to reach a decision. The decision was made that Ms. Gonzales and Ms. Hano would provide information that Ms. Haven would not be able to provide. Based on the information that was provided during the January meeting by Ms. Haven and the additional information requested, the Executive Committee decided to provide a salary range for the Council's consideration.

MOTION PASSED: To approve the recommendation by the Executive Committee for a salary range of \$115,000 to \$130,000 for the Executive Director made by Nicole Banks and seconded by Jill Hano **passed with 18 yeas and 4 abstentions.**

MOTION PASSED: Allow the Chair, Christi Gonzales to negotiate with the Executive Director on salary within the range of \$115,000 to \$130,000 made by Mike Billings and seconded by Lauren Womack **passed with 16 yeas and 3 abstentions.**

The Executive Committee also discussed the Legislative Advocacy Agenda Process and the lack of Council member participation in the agenda process and in general with LaCAN activities. The committee also discussed ensuring applicants are aware of the level of involvement that is expected during the interview process and new members receive more specific information about LaCAN during new member orientation. The Council will also be updating the bylaws before the next quarterly meeting to determine what can be added to ensure members are active. Unfortunately, the committee was unable to provide feedback on how to make the legislative advocacy agenda process better which could include more involvement from Council members due to running out of time. However, they plan to continue the conversation at future meetings.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT - Ebony Haven

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

- Legislative Roundtables were held in person with a virtual option for the 1st time since COVID and had very good turnouts across the state with a total of 389

participants including 9 legislators, assistant and/or BESE members and 9 Council members attending.

- Legislative Update: All three legislative advocacy agenda items for additional funding will be appropriated in HB1 and LaCAN held YSDs in House Appropriations on March 12th when the Louisiana Department of Health's (LDH) budget was heard and March 20th for public testimony.
- The next YSD will be Tuesday, April 23rd where House Appropriations will vote on HB1. This is a great opportunity for Council members to get involved by responding to the AA and/or attending YSD.
- The Council's 2023 Annual Report was shared which includes initiatives from the 2023 Action Plan and the successes from the activities included in the plan like Partners in Policymaking having its first in-person class since 2020, the return of Youth Leadership Forum and the wonderful legislative wins.
- Lastly the Chair, Chair of the Education and Employment Committee and Council staff met with staff from the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) including their public policy staff and credentialing staff regarding the [letter](#) sent by the Council addressing concerns for [Act 392 of the 2023 legislative session](#) which allows convicted felons to obtain teaching certifications. LDOE staff stated there are already policies in place to ensure only teachers with certain felonies are eligible to appeal and receive teaching certification. There is also a list of "Never-Evers" which would not allow a teacher to appeal under any circumstances, so there are safeguards in place to protect students. Additionally, starting January 2025, new educators have to have a cleared background check before getting a teaching certification.

BUDGET REPORT - Ebony Haven

Ms. Haven shared details from the [SFY24 Budget Report through March](#), and highlighted the following:

- All contracts have been approved and are moving along as planned including expenditures. More information on the contractual activities in the status report.
- Recite Me Accessibility Toolbar (on Council's website) subscription renewal was paid in January which accounts for the communication/website/hosting cost seen on the budget.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

PLANNING COMMITTEE – Lauren Womack

The FY2025 Planning Committee consisting of Patti Barovechio, Mike Billings, Julie Foster-Hagan, Jill Hano, Christi Gonzales, Melinda Perrodin, Tory Rocca, Brooke Stewart, Erick Taylor and Lauren Womack (Chair) met on March 11th.

After the Committee met, Council staff met with the contractor for disability voting rights training, the Arc of Louisiana, and they recommended the Council discontinue the

activity due to lack of participation. The Council considered recommendations from staff and decided to also discontinue the emergency preparedness training. The Council added collaboration with LSU Human Development Center on an awareness campaign for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and a pilot training program for professionals and families on treatment of youth with FASD. Funding for a Partners in Policymaking (PIP) reunion to reengage PIP graduates in advocacy and training for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities on transitioning to adulthood was also added.

MOTION PASSED: To accept the FFY2025 Action Plan from the FY2025 Planning Committee with the recommended changes made by the Council **passed with 11 yeas, 4 nays and 5 abstentions.**

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT (E/E) COMMITTEE – Renoda Washington

The Education and Employment Committee met Wednesday, April 17th for their committee meeting and did not have any recommendations for the Council to consider. The committee received a lot of great updates from the Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) and the LDOE.

LRS has their combined state plan out for public comment, and they have also updated their website which includes a reformatted and user friendly version of their policy and procedure manual and a new manual called a fee schedule. There was a statewide vendor training about the rate change. LRS is also restructuring staff, and this shift will allow rehabilitation counselor associates to work with consumers on Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS).

The new LDOE State Ombudsman whose role is to help families of students with disabilities navigate conflict processes was invited to the meeting. The committee expressed concerns over having one ombudsman for the whole state, how the ombudsman remains neutral as an LDOE employee, and the role of the ombudsman. The committee suggested LDOE include a contact person for dispute resolution and complaint process investigations since that is not the role of the ombudsmen. LDOE also shared there will be a 2nd year data collection on cameras in special education classrooms in May with that update being presented to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) in August. Lastly, LDOE gave legislative updates, specifically on Bulletin 1706. The specific timelines outlined in the Bulletin will be adopted July 1st, and the changes in processes and procedures for school systems must be done for the 2024-2025 school year.

The Council recessed for lunch at 11:57 a.m. by unanimous consent.

The Council reconvened the meeting at 1:05 p.m.

ACT 378 SUB-COMMITTEE – Lauren Womack

The Act 378 Sub-committee met Wednesday, April 17th for their committee meeting and did not have any recommendations for the Council to consider. The committee reviewed fiscal year 24 (FY23) third quarter data for programs within the Offices for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) and Behavioral Health (OBH), and Aging and Adult Services/Arc of LA. These reports can be found linked in the committee agenda on the Council's meetings [webpage](#).

OCDD provided the committee with a report showing all the districts and authorities that have spent at least ten percentage points above or below these averages. Seven out of the 10 fell into this category. This just shows the regions are responding to requests which vary region by region. No trends were identified.

The committee also discussed incontinent supplies being offered in waivers and what impacts that may have had on Individual and Family Support (IFS) funding. Representatives of the districts and authorities reported a small decrease in IFS requests for incontinent supplies, but they noted restrictions on the types of products provided in waivers have left some recipients without the supplies best suited for their needs. This was an issue the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) planned to look into. It was also noted many waiver recipients are having difficulty finding providers for their incontinence needs, and some providers who assist with IFS request are not opting to become waiver providers due to reimbursement concerns.

SELF DETERMINATION/COMMUNITY INCLUSION COMMITTEE (SD/CI) – Brooke Stewart

The Self Determination and Community Inclusion Committee met Wednesday, April 17th and has one recommendation to present to the Council. The committee received a lot of great updates from OCDD, LDH and Medicaid. A lot of the information shared is also included in their April agency reports and are available for more information.

The committee also received an update on Families Helping Families of New Orleans since the Center has been placed on probation for Fiscal Year 24 due to concerns in their legislative audit. Essentially their funding has been reduced by half for this year. They have also been submitting financial documents, policies and quarterly reports sharing what progresses have been made over this year. While the committee agreed the Center was making some improvements, there were still concerns for the management and functioning of the Center especially given the results of their most recent legislative audit which found similar issues to the year before. The Center Executive Director expressed the continued struggles due to lack of funding and expressed concerns that staffing may be greatly impacted should funding not be restored. Thus the committee felt some funding should be restored based on progress, but not all funding, until the fiscal year 24 legislative audit is complete which should be available next March or April. This additional funding would also be contingent upon additional dollars being appropriated by the legislature.

MOTION PASSED: The Self-Determination and Community Inclusion Committee recommends restoring \$28,000 to Families Helping Families of New Orleans' (FHF NOLA) budget in Fiscal Year 25 with the opportunity to receive full funding in Fiscal Year 26 pending positive outcomes of the Center's financial audit for Fiscal Year 24 **passed with 16 yeas, 1 nay and 2 abstentions.**

STANDING COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS:

[Louisiana Rehabilitation Services](#) – Courtney Ryland

[Bureau of Health Services Financing](#) – Brain Bennett

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

[Office of Aging and Adult Services](#) – Melinda Richard

[Department of Education](#) – Meredith Jordan

[Governor's Office of Elderly Affairs](#) – No representative was present

[Governor's Office of Disability Affairs](#) – Jamar Ennis

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

[Families Helping Families Centers](#) – Kristen Reed

[Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities](#) – Julie Foster Hagan

[LSU Human Development Center](#) – Phil Wilson

There was no public comment.

Ms. Haven reminded Council members that their financial disclosures are due May 15th and for any member that has not been Senate confirmed to please submit their information as soon as possible. Ms. Haven also asked if there were any more members interested in being appointed to the Bylaws Ad Hoc Committee since a few members were out in January due to the icy weather. Interested members included: Nicole Banks, Erick Taylor, Tony Piontek, Melinda Perrodin, Angela Harmon and Vivienne Webb.

The Council was also reminded about the Yellow Shirt Day on Tuesday, April 23rd.

The DD Council April Quarterly meeting adjourned at 3:52 p.m by unanimous consent.