

Council Meeting Summary

April 30, 2026, 10:00 A.M. – 4:00 P.M.
4354 S. Sherwood Forest Blvd. Ste. 200
Baton Rouge, LA 70816

LIVE Streamed Via YouTube

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

View meeting transcript [here](#).

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ashley Allen, Patti Barovechio (OPH/CSHS), Melissa Bayham (LRS), Brian Bennett (BSHF), Michael Billings, Ayden Blunsch, Alaina Chachere, Cheri Crain (GOEA), Liam Doyle (GODA), Landon Hanks, Jill Hano, Frank Macaluso, , Robby Smith, Brooke Stewart, Julia Tanner, Erick Taylor, Renoda Washington (Chair), Gearry Williams (OAAS), Karen Xu

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jude Boynton, Angela Harmon, Cherie Kelly-Aduli, Lamartine Meda, Pasqueal Nguyen,

GUESTS PRESENT: Constance Alphonse (LSU-HDC), Tracy Barker, Bernard Brown (OCDD), Brenda Cossé, Nicole DeJean, Rowan DeJean, Erin Downing, Mylinda Elliott, Nicole Flores, Julie Folse, Rebecca Fruge, Lynsey Hebert (Transcriptionist), Chanel Jackson, Nicole Learson (Parliamentarian), Christina Martin, Ashley McReynolds, Kelly Monroe, Sarah Mulhearn, Jacki Pierce, Bambi Polotzola, Susan Riehn, Dr. Marilyn Thornton, Ashley Volion (DRLA), Lauren Wells (LDOE)

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

Renoda Washington called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m. with a quorum present.

The [January 2026 Meeting Summary](#) was approved by unanimous consent.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT – Renoda Washington

Ms. Washington welcomed the newly appointed Council members, gave a summary of the January 2026 Executive committee meeting, and discussed the meetings she attended during the 2nd quarter of FY2026 including several of the 2026 Legislative Roundtables. She also discussed Council Member expectations regarding timely responses to emails and attendance in and preparation for Council meetings. Lastly, she encouraged members to reflect on their roles and responsibilities.

Executive Committee – Renoda Washington

For more information, please see the [summary](#). The Executive Committee received an update on the 2026 Legislative Advocacy agenda. The committee also reviewed the Plain Language and Easy Read

versions of the Council bylaws and Policies and Procedures. Lastly the committee discussed the average expenses of the Council meetings and three options for the new Council meeting schedule.

MOTION PASSED: The Executive Committee recommends approval of the plain language and easy read versions of the Council Bylaws and Policies and Procedures. **Motion passes without objection with 18 yeas and 0 nays or abstentions.**

MOTION PASSED: The Executive Committee recommends Option #2 (2 in-person and 2 virtual meetings) as the new meeting schedule starting in July 2026. **Motion passes without objection with 10 yeas, 1 nay and 6 abstentions.**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT - Ebony Haven

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

- The President signed an appropriations package for Federal Fiscal Year 2026 (FFY26), and all DD Act programs, including our DD Councils, were level funded. Ms. Haven emphasized that it's really important to note that the LaDDC federal funding was \$1.38M for quite some time. However, last year (FFY25) our funding was reduced by \$3,290 (\$1.37M) and this year (FFY26) our funding was reduced by another \$9,150 (\$1.36M) for a net reduction of \$12,440. Therefore, it is very important the Council continue to reduce administrative cost.
- Council staff reviewed internal operations, and staff will continue to function as a team of 7 instead of 8 staff (after one of the two vacant Program Monitor positions is filled) to reduce administrative costs.
- The LaCAN Leaders and Families Helping Families Centers were recognized for a job well done on the 2026 Regional Legislative Roundtables. Ms. Haven also acknowledged Council Member participation this year including members who provided testimonies.
- The LaCAN Leader vacancy in Region 4 has been filled and the new leader, Ericka Joseph, will be reaching out to Council members in Region 4 soon.

BUDGET REPORT - Ebony Haven

Ms. Haven highlighted information in the 3rd quarter (FY26) Budget Report including:

- Operating expenses in February increased due to issues with getting the rent setup for payments in the State system which resulted in an accumulation of payments for 4 months and one large payment in February. Additionally, the moving company was not a State vendor so there was a delay in payment as well.
- In Supplies, a credit was given in January due to the return of an item not needed.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

ACT 378 SUB-COMMITTEE – Bambi Polotzola

The Act 378 Sub-committee met on April 15th and did not have any recommendations for the Council to consider. The committee reviewed FY26 3rd quarter reports for programs within the Office of Behavioral Health, Offices for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities and Aging and Adult Services/ Arc of LA. All reports can be found linked in our committee agenda on the Council's meetings [webpage](#) if you would like to review. For more information on the committee meeting, please see the [summary](#).

2027 ACTION PLAN COMMITTEE – Ayden Blunsch

The FFY 2027 Action Plan Ad Hoc Committee met on [Friday March 20, 2026](#) and [Tuesday April 21, 2026](#). The [FY2027 Action Plan](#) and the [FY2027 Contractual Recommendations](#) were discussed and several new activities were added for the 1st Action Plan in the Council's new Five-Year Plan including Activities: 2.1.2 Early Identification, 2.2.2 Transportation Study, 2.2.3 Emergency Plans, 3.1.3 Transition Planning, 3.1.4 Childcare Training and 3.2.1 Job Fairs.

MOTION PASSED: To approve the FFY2027 Draft Action Plan with contractual recommendations from the FY2027 Planning Committee **passed with 11 yeas, 0 nays and 6 abstentions**.

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

The SD/CI Committee met on April 1st and did not have any recommendations for the Council to consideration. The Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) and Medicaid were unable to attend, so the committee only received updates from the Office for Adult and Aging Services (OAAS). The committee also discussed updates on the non-contractual and contractual activities under Goals 1 and 2, and Council staff raised concerns for the Council's Women's Health and Sex Education initiatives contracted by LSU. More updates on those and all other initiatives can be found in the [Status of Planned Activities](#). For more information, please see the [summary](#).

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT (E/E) COMMITTEE – Stephanie Carmona

The Education and Employment Committee met on April 8th and had one recommendation for the Council to consideration. However, after gathering more information and determining there was miscommunication with the Council's meeting schedule, the Chair recommended withdrawing the motion to write a letter to the Louisiana Superintendent of Education, Dr. Cade Brumley and Boards and Commissions to explain the importance that a representative from the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) be present at committee and Council meetings.

MOTION WITHDRAWN: The Education and Employment Committee recommends the full council consider writing a letter to Cade Brumley and Boards and Commissions to explain that having a representative from Louisiana Department of Education is part of the DD Act. **Motion withdrawn without objections.**

The committee received updates from Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS), and LDOE sent a report which staff reviewed. The committee received updates on the non-contractual and contractual activities under Goal 3 which can be found in the [Status of Planned Activities](#). For more information, please see the [summary](#).

STANDING COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS:

[LSU Human Development Center](#) – Constance Alphonse
[Disability Rights of Louisiana](#) – Ashley Volion

The Council recessed for lunch at 12:07 p.m. by unanimous consent.

The Council reconvened the meeting at 1:08 p.m. A quorum was established.

STANDING COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS CONT'D

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

[Governor's Office of Elderly Affairs](#) – Cheri Crain

[Louisiana Rehabilitation Services](#) – Melissa Bayham

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

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

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

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

[Department of Education](#) – Lauren Wells

There were no public comments.

Council staff announced the next quarterly Council meetings in July 2026 and reminded members their 2025 Financial Disclosure forms are due on May 15th. A reminder about Disability Awareness Day on May 4th was provided, and members were also asked to complete their Council meeting survey via paper or using the QR code.

The staff also announced FHFGBR Director, Dr. Marilyn Thornton's retirement and thanked her for all her work with the Council. Lastly, Council members were informed if they would like to attend a "virtual" meeting in person and need assistance with expenses, the Council would gladly make the accommodation.

The DD Council April Quarterly meeting adjourned at 2:57 p.m. by unanimous consent.