

LOUISIANA SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP COUNCIL

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6 MEETING MINUTES FOR THE
7 LOUISIANA SMALL BUSINESS AND
8 ENTREPRENEURSHIP COUNCIL
9 HELD VIA ZOOM
10 ON THE 26TH DAY OF JANUARY, 2021
11 COMMENCING AT 10:32 A.M.
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15 REPORTED BY: ELICIA H. WOODWORTH, CCR
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1 Board Appearances:
2 Mandi Mitchell - Assistant Secretary, LED LSBE
President and LED
3
4 Allison Clarke - Deputy Secretary, Office of GeauxBIZ at
Louisiana Department of State
5 Kelisha Garrett - Executive Director, New Orleans
Regional Black Chamber of Commerce
6
7 Bryan Greenwood - Associate Director, Louisiana Small
Business Development Center
8 Kenny Anderson - Executive Director, Stephenson
Entrepreneurship Institute
9
10 Edward "EJ" Krampe III - President & CEO, MacLaff, Inc.
Courtney Davis - CEO, Bart's Office Moving
11
12 Alta Baker - President & CEO, Safe Haven Enterprises,
LLC
13 Richard Vince Hayward - CEO, L.H. Hayward & Company, LLC
14 Angelica Rivera - President, Colmex Construction
15 E. René Soulé - Owner, E. René Soulé & Associates
16 Iam Tucker - President & CEO, ILSI Engineering
17 Zazell V. Dudley - Owner, Dudley Worldwide, LLC
18
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1 Staff Appearances:
2 Sonja Christophe, Manager, Special Projects for the
Assistant Secretary
3
4 Stephanie Hartman, Director of Small Business Service
Team, Community Competitiveness & Small Business
Services
5
6 Don Pierson, Secretary of Economic Development
7
8 Pattie Pipes, Administrative Assistant
9
10 Robin Porter, Attorney
11
12 Patrick Witty, Executive Director of Community
Competitiveness & Small Business Services
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1 MS. MITCHELL: All right, everyone. We
2 shall call this meeting to order.
3 Mr. Chairman, if you don't mind, the first
4 portion of the meeting up through the completion of the
5 election of chair and vice chair, I will oversee and
6 manage the meeting if that's okay with you.
7 MR. KRAMPE: I would like for you to manage
8 the entire meeting right now if you would.
9 MS. MITCHELL: Okay. Well, good morning,
10 everybody. Happy Tuesday. It is Tuesday, January 26th,
11 and on behalf of Chairman E.J. Krampe, I, Mandi
12 Mitchell, Assistant Secretary of LED, would like to call
13 to order the Louisiana Small Business and
14 Entrepreneurship Council meeting. And I do have to read
15 the certification because we are meeting virtually
16 today.
17 In accordance with Louisiana Revised Statute
18 43:17.1 and there currently being in effect a public
19 health emergency as declared by Governor John Bel
20 Edwards in Executive Proclamation 25 JBE 2020 issued on
21 March 11, 2020, in response to the threat posed by
22 COVID-19, which remains in effect pursuant to Executive
23 Proclamation 7 JBE 2021 issued of January 12th, 2021,
24 which declared that a statewide public health emergency
25 continues to exist and which remains in effect from



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<p style="text-align: right;">Page 5</p> <p>1 January 13th, 2021 to February 10th, 2021 or as extended 2 by any subsequent proclamation, unless terminated 3 sooner, this notice shall serve as a certification by 4 the presiding officer of the Louisiana Small Business 5 and Entrepreneurship Council here represented by 6 Secretary Don Pierson and Assistant Secretary Mandi 7 Mitchell that: 1, A declared state of public emergency 8 exists through February 10th, 2021 in response to the 9 threat posed by COVID-19 as reflected in Executive 10 Proclamation 7 JBE 2021 issued of January 12th, 2021; 2, 11 An in-person meeting of the LSBEC conducted in 12 accordance with otherwise ordinary provisions of the 13 Louisiana Open Meetings Law would be detrimental to the 14 health, safety and welfare of the public; and, 3, The 15 agenda of the meeting to be held on the 26th day of 16 January, 2021 is limited to matters that are critical to 17 continuation of the business of the LSBEC meeting, 18 cannot be postponed or delayed due to a legal 19 requirement or other deadline. 20 Considering the foregoing and pursuant to 21 Louisiana Revised Statute 43:17.1, the Louisiana Small 22 Business and Entrepreneurship Council meeting on January 23 26th, 2021 at 10:30 a.m. will be held via video 24 conference and in a matter that allows for observation 25 and input by members of the public as set forth in the</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 7</p> <p>1 MS. DAVIS: Present. 2 MS. MITCHELL: Cassie Felder. 3 (No response.) 4 MS. MITCHELL: I saw Cassie, and I spoke to 5 Cassie earlier. 6 Alta Baker. 7 MS. BAKER: Present. 8 MS. MITCHELL: Vince Hayward. 9 MR. HAYWARD: Present. 10 MS. MITCHELL: Angelica Rivera. 11 MS. RIVERA: Present. 12 MS. MITCHELL: E. René Soulé. 13 (No response.) 14 MS. MITCHELL: Iam Tucker. 15 (No response.) 16 MS. MITCHELL: Thank you. We have a quorum. 17 And at this time, I would call for a motion to adopt the 18 minutes of the April 14th, 2020 and January 16th, 2020 19 meetings of the LSBEC. 20 MR. HAYWARD: Move to adopt. 21 MS. MITCHELL: And do we have a second? 22 MS. DAVIS: I'll second. 23 MR. GREENWOOD: Second. 24 MS. MITCHELL: Thank you. 25 MS. DAVIS: Everybody seconds.</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 6</p> <p>1 notice of such meeting posted herewith. 2 And the public will have an opportunity to 3 provide comments at the end of our agenda. Those 4 comments need to be submitted by e-mail to Sonja 5 Christophe at LA.gov. So it's Sonja.Cristophe@la.gov, 6 S-o-n-j-a, dot, C-h-r-i-s-t-o-p-h-e, 2 @la.gov. And 7 this has been properly noticed to the public. 8 At this time, I will call the roll of the 9 members of the Louisiana Small Business Entrepreneurship 10 Counsel, and I will read those off in order of 11 appointing agency. 12 Allison Clarke. 13 MS. CLARKE: Present. 14 MS. MITCHELL: Kelisha Garrett. 15 MS. GARRETT: Present. 16 MS. MITCHELL: Bryan Greenwood. 17 MR. GREENWOOD: Present. 18 MS. MITCHELL: Kenny Anderson. 19 MR. ANDERSON: Present. 20 MS. MITCHELL: I see you Kenny. 21 John Everett. 22 (No response.) 23 MS. MITCHELL: E.J. Krampe. 24 MR. KRAMPE: Present. 25 MS. MITCHELL: Courtney Davis.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 8</p> <p>1 MS. MITCHELL: Thank you, Courtney. 2 We have a motion to adopt our minutes from 3 our January 16th and April 14th, 2020 meetings. 4 All those in favor? 5 (Several members respond "aye.") 6 MS. MITCHELL: Any opposition? 7 (No response.) 8 MS. MITCHELL: Any corrections needed to the 9 minutes? 10 (No response.) 11 MS. MITCHELL: Okay. The "ayes" have it, 12 and the minutes have been adopted. 13 At this time, this being our annual meeting 14 for 2021, we do have to, according to our bylaws, elect 15 our chair and vice chair, and we have spoken to both 16 individuals in those seats and have indicated an 17 interest to remain. So I would like to make a motion to 18 nominate Mr. E.J. Krampe to serve as chair of the LSBEC. 19 MS. BAKER: I so move. I should have done 20 it separately. I'm sorry. 21 MS. MITCHELL: Thank you, Ms. Baker. 22 Any other nominations for chair for 2021? 23 (No response.) 24 MS. MITCHELL: Nominations for chair have 25 been closed, and we have one nominee. Mr. Krampe,</p>



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1 congratulations.

2 MR. KRAMPE: Thank you very much.

3 MS. MITCHELL: You are raking in all the

4 bucks with your chairmanship.

5 Okay. At this time, I would like to open

6 the nomination for vice chair, and, again, Ms. Tucker

7 indicated a willingness to continue serving in that

8 role, and she allowed me to announce that to the group

9 today.

10 Any other nominations for vice chair?

11 (No response.)

12 MS. MITCHELL: Do we have a motion to

13 renominate Ms. Tucker or any other nominees?

14 MS. GARRETT: So moved. I move. It's

15 Kelisha.

16 MS. MITCHELL: Thank you, Kelisha.

17 Any other nominees for vice chair?

18 (No response.)

19 MS. MITCHELL: Ms. Tucker has been reelected

20 as our vice chair for this for 2021, our reset year is

21 what I'm calling it. We have Chairman Mr. E.J. Krampe,

22 and Vice Chair Ms. Iam Tucker.

23 All right. So moving on to Agenda Item

24 Number 6, which is an update on 2020 Recommendations and

25 a discussion on our 2021 report. I am going to try my

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1 level best to be succinct because we do have some

2 distinguished guests with us today, and their time is

3 precious, but, also, they are very, very interested in

4 the work that we're doing here at the LSBEC.

5 So our 2020 report recommendations are

6 indeed forward focused. We really did, during 2019 and

7 early 2020, a deep dive into identifying some things

8 that can improve Louisiana's environment for small

9 businesses in Louisiana with the core focus areas of

10 access to capital, occupational licensing reform,

11 research on some regulatory reform items, such as

12 workers' compensation insurance and tort reform, and

13 then enhancements to the Hudson initiative.

14 So not unlike many other countless

15 organizations and efforts, the pandemic and Hurricanes

16 Laura and Delta put a damper on our ability to move

17 forward in a robust way due to a requirement that we

18 pivot to response, recovery and business retention

19 efforts.

20 So while the Coronavirus got in the way of

21 major progress, we did accomplish a number of things

22 within our report recommendations for 2020. In working

23 with the Office of State Procurement and with our guest

24 speaker who is here today, Representative Gary Carter,

25 and his HSR2 committee, that committee acted upon one of

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1 our recommendations, which was to enhance state

2 government procurement opportunities for small

3 businesses by adding more flexibility to the rules

4 regarding small purchases. And I am not going to steal

5 my good friend Representative Carter's thunder, so I

6 will -- he's a little bit later on the agenda. He's

7 going to elaborate on that for us, but that's very

8 exciting progress.

9 We also are taking a look at and moving

10 forward with implementing partnership with SourceLink,

11 and we're looking at doing a pilot in a few weeks

12 throughout the state. And just as a reminder,

13 SourceLink is a robust virtual online resource mapping

14 tool. How many times have you come across a fellow

15 small business that did not know that a program or a

16 service or a tax credit or rebate existed and they could

17 have benefitted from it? There's so much information

18 out there that it also sometimes becomes information

19 overload, and sometimes people don't know where the

20 resources are, how to find them, how to plug in. And so

21 we are working very hard on that, and our Director of

22 Small Business Services, Stephanie Hartman, may very

23 well touch upon that during her report.

24 I want to briefly highlight some of our

25 COVID-19 specific efforts that benefitted small

Page 12

1 businesses and continue to do so. We launched a

2 Louisiana Loan Portfolio Guaranty Program. Now, the

3 loan application window for that program closed December

4 31st, 2020, but this program was designed to stand in

5 the gap where the PPP Or the Louisiana Main Street

6 Guaranty Program was not a good fit for certain

7 businesses. So for businesses with less than 100

8 employees up to -- they could apply for a loan up to

9 \$100,000 with rates no more than 3.5 percent and with a

10 very generous 180-day delay on any sort of payments.

11 Under that program, we loaned out about \$4-million.

12 Now, that's a little less than what we would

13 have liked, but, again, keep in mind other resources

14 were out there, such as Paycheck Protection Plan, which

15 is a forgivable loan, such as other grant resources.

16 We also launched an e-Commerce platform

17 opportunity in partnership with Shopify, one of the

18 leading firms throughout the country that helps

19 businesses to bring their resources online. Think of

20 how many small retailers in the state could have

21 benefitted from having that tool available pre-pandemic.

22 Of course, you know, hindsight is 20/20, but it's

23 something -- it's a tool that we've made available. It

24 is still a tool that's available. There are a number of

25 webinars on LED's website, OpportunityLouisiana.com,



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1 that provides information on how businesses can plug in
 2 and access the worldwide web to sell their wares or to
 3 allow customers to make online purchases and then pick
 4 up.
 5 We facilitated countless connections to SBA
 6 for banks in the state and for small businesses
 7 throughout the state, and I have to give a shout out to
 8 our partners with Bryan Greenwood and the team at LSBCD
 9 for their work in helping individuals navigate through
 10 the process early on to apply for the Paycheck
 11 Protection Program, but LED helped to usher individuals
 12 to those points of connection for assistance.
 13 We also advocated directly to the SBA and
 14 indirectly through our members of congress for easier
 15 access to Paycheck Protection Program or more
 16 flexibility in the use of those funds and for greater
 17 opportunities for forgiveness through the Paycheck
 18 Protection Program.
 19 So LED was quite busy, and that's just
 20 scratching the surface. But, again, I don't want to
 21 steal any thunder from our Secretary, Don Pierson, who
 22 will touch upon a number of things including all that
 23 LED that was engaged in and still is engaged in in this
 24 fight in the pandemic.
 25 We also provided support to the subcommittee

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1 on women, minority and veteran-owned businesses who's
 2 chairman is here with us today. So I'm not going to,
 3 again, steal his thunder, but I'll tell you, we weren't
 4 able to fully dive into every aspect of the report
 5 recommendations for 2020, but we were hard at work on
 6 behalf of small businesses throughout all of 2020 prior
 7 to that, which is why our team received a gold award
 8 from the International Economic Development Council, and
 9 we continued to do so.
 10 I will tell you, 2020 is our reset year. We
 11 are optimistic that once our country's leaders and our
 12 healthcare experts get a handle on Coronavirus and
 13 vaccinations, that we will be well on our way to a very
 14 good trajectory.
 15 So that wraps up just a brief overview and
 16 update on the implementation and the research aspect of
 17 the report recommendations. I will recommend that our
 18 2020 report is a restatement of the 2020 recommendation,
 19 but I would also like to ask that our members of the
 20 council contemplate any new focus areas that you'd like
 21 to recommend. And you will see a little later on the
 22 agenda, we will do a roundtable of all of our members,
 23 and I would ask you at that point in time if you see any
 24 focus areas that are glaringly omitted that we should
 25 take on in 2021, please mention that during the

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1 roundtable segment, and what we'll do at LED is freshen
 2 up the report and then submit that over to the
 3 legislature and finalize an update of the report.
 4 So that concludes my report out to you-all,
 5 and that concludes the Agenda Item Number 6. Before we
 6 move on, any comments from members of the council?
 7 MS. DAVIS: I just only have one comment,
 8 and that's really the fact that I guess that I'm
 9 grateful that we are in the State of Louisiana and that
 10 we do have the LED that's kind of out there fighting the
 11 good fight for business owners, and so I appreciate the
 12 hard work that the LED provides for the business owners
 13 in the state. And I'm grateful. So that's really all
 14 I want to say is just comment that I am grateful that we
 15 have such a great organization, and I don't think every
 16 state has the benefit of such a strong economic
 17 development division, and so just much appreciated.
 18 MS. MITCHELL: Thank you so much, Courtney,
 19 and, you know, I will tell you that we hear that when
 20 we're in the halls at conferences -- well, not in the
 21 halls now, but when we're on the virtual calls at
 22 conferences with our peers that they do admire and
 23 respect the work that LED does. And I will tell you,
 24 Secretary Pierson, under his leadership and under his
 25 administration, we have been able to focus way much more

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1 on small business, I could say, than we have, at least
 2 in my experience. I span two administrations. And I
 3 would just say, small business is not an afterthought.
 4 It is very much at the forefront. So thank you for
 5 those comments, Courtney.
 6 Okay. Any other comments before we move on
 7 to the next agenda item?
 8 (No response.)
 9 MS. MITCHELL: Okay. Hearing none, I have
 10 the pleasure of introducing our guest today,
 11 Representative Gary Carter, a second-term legislator who
 12 is very much now pretty much a veteran and a leader in
 13 the Louisiana legislature, and he is one who doesn't
 14 take any time to come in and scope out the place. He
 15 comes in with sleeves rolled up ready to get to work,
 16 and what he has done is, earlier this year, in taking a
 17 look at what's happened to small business around the
 18 state, and particularly the impact that the pandemic has
 19 had on disadvantaged business enterprises, women,
 20 minority and veteran-owned businesses, he has said
 21 "Okay, legislature, we have some power and authority and
 22 tools and resources, what are some things that we can do
 23 to support these businesses as they attempt to survive
 24 throughout the pandemic and to recover?"
 25 And so he launched the, we call it in short,



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1 the HSR2 committee, House Study Resolution 2, but it is
 2 the committee on -- subcommittee of the appropriations
 3 committee on women, minority and veteran-owned business
 4 enterprises.
 5 So, Representative Gary Carter, the floor is
 6 yours.
 7 MR. CARTER: Thank you so much, Mandi. So
 8 good to see you. So good to see you, as always, in
 9 charge of a very important meeting. It's also good to
 10 see Secretary Pierson. And I see many other friends of
 11 mine, Kelisha, and others, participating on this call.
 12 And thank you--all and your committee, your council's
 13 good work for working on small businesses throughout
 14 that State of Louisiana.
 15 And I heard someone say earlier that we have
 16 a lot of good things going on with LED in Louisiana, and
 17 I certainly want to congratulate you--all for doing all
 18 of the good work that you--all are doing. And this all
 19 came to happen real fast during this COVID year. During
 20 the regular session of last year, it was an irregular
 21 regular session. We had COVID, so we were working
 22 remotely, and it was an abbreviated, sort of an
 23 elongated, weird-to-explain session, but during that
 24 session, we noticed that there was, as we can think back
 25 of a year ago, in the middle of COVID, it wasn't just

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1 that COVID happened. We had the plunge of oil and gas
 2 prices throughout the State of Louisiana, throughout the
 3 world, as a result of geopolitics, in addition to COVID.
 4 And so when the session really got rolling, there were
 5 all of these incentives and ideas in terms of what we
 6 can do to help those big manufacturing oil and gas-type
 7 companies in the State of Louisiana. And, listen, I'm
 8 in favor of jobs and whatever we can do to support those
 9 businesses that are great employers, but I didn't really
 10 hear or we really didn't hear too much talk in terms of
 11 these are the special programs that we need for small
 12 businesses, this is the sort of outreach that we need
 13 directly to them see to see how they are dealing with
 14 this pandemic. And early on in the pandemic there was
 15 some research done by The Wall Street Journal and The
 16 New York Times and others that focused on not only was
 17 the pandemic having a disproportionate health affect on
 18 the population, but it was also having a
 19 disproportionate impact on minority, female and
 20 veteran-owned enterprises, that those businesses were
 21 already struggling, and the pandemic was just a dead
 22 nail to many of them.
 23 So we formed this committee and we worked in
 24 a bipartisan way, and we know that we have so many good
 25 groups out there doing good work, such as this council,

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1 such as many our chambers, such as many of our
 2 membership organizations, but we wanted to do something
 3 that was driven by us, by the legislators, so we formed
 4 this committee of the money committees. We have members
 5 from the corporations, we have members from commerce,
 6 members from ways and means, and our purpose is what can
 7 we do to help these small businesses. And last year, as
 8 probably part of the Main Street program, tens of
 9 millions of dollars were set to be given to minority
 10 businesses in the first 48 -- or the first few weeks of
 11 the program, and so we wanted to study how did those
 12 funds reach those businesses, those minority businesses,
 13 and did it help those industries and so forth.
 14 So the committee, we sought advice, we
 15 sought testimony from the Treasurer's office, from the
 16 Department of Revenue, Mandi, the Department of DOTD,
 17 public input, the Bankers Association provided input,
 18 the diverse Chambers of Commerce provided input. And
 19 what we learned was that many of our small businesses
 20 that were struggling during COVID, they couldn't
 21 participate in any of the state programs because they
 22 didn't have the formalities in order. Many of them
 23 couldn't participate in our Main Street program or
 24 through a SBA program or the PPP program because all of
 25 their formalities, the documentations weren't in order.

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1 Then we learned that many of those businesses, even if
 2 they had, at one point in time, had the formalities
 3 properly in order, they didn't keep up with it. Some of
 4 it was minor, such as paying the \$25 fee to be, you
 5 know, current with the Secretary of State, and some of
 6 it was major, you know, issues with the Department of
 7 Revenue, issues with taxation and letting that being the
 8 impediment.
 9 So what the committee started doing was we
 10 started focusing on what can we do as legislators to
 11 make it easy for people to start a business in the State
 12 of Louisiana, maintain that business in the State of
 13 Louisiana, and this is, perhaps, the most important one
 14 of all, how do you do business with the State of
 15 Louisiana. And that is critical because when you think
 16 about it, the State of Louisiana is the largest
 17 contractor here in the State of Louisiana, and so we
 18 want to help make sure that those small businesses have
 19 access to the largest contractor, which is the state,
 20 which benefits directly from those businesses being able
 21 to grow and prosper. So based upon that, how do we help
 22 people start a business, maintain a business and do
 23 business with the State of Louisiana.
 24 After these hearings, you know, I'm pleased
 25 to say that we came up with some recommendations, and



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1 one of the recommendations focused on the Hudson
 2 Initiative. The Hudson Initiative allows small
 3 businesses to bypass the procurement, which is a
 4 complicated process, the procurement process in order to
 5 do business with the state if it's a small purchase. A
 6 small purchase is defined by less than \$15,000. We were
 7 able to double that -- or recommend, based upon the
 8 advice we got from Mandi, from the Department of
 9 Procurement, Jonathan Walker, from the input we got from
 10 the various chambers to make a recommendation to the
 11 Governor that that amount be doubled, and he did. He
 12 signed that recommendation, and that's wonderful,
 13 because at the end of the year, I remember receiving a
 14 report, and the report was talking about the Hudson
 15 Initiative, and I think it's over \$82-million. And so
 16 the opportunity to increase the amount of that, you
 17 know, that is not only giving -- that is giving our
 18 small businesses access to contracts, that's access to
 19 opportunity, that's access to grow your business, that's
 20 an opportunity for you to put your foot in the door and
 21 show the good work that you can do and grow and expand.
 22 So we're excited about that, you know, to
 23 have a -- to be able to form a committee, to do in a
 24 nonpolitical, non-bombastic sort of way, how do we put
 25 results on the board. And we did it by building

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1 coalitions. Many of the issues that minority, female
 2 and veteran-owned enterprises are the same sort of
 3 issues that rural businesses have. Many of the
 4 fisherman have those sort of issues. Having access to
 5 broadband and those sorts of things in rural parts of
 6 the state or access to banking in rural parts of the
 7 state benefits those in the urban parts of the state and
 8 minority female enterprises everywhere.
 9 So working across partisan lines and
 10 building coalitions to actually get stuff done, and I
 11 know I feel like I'm talking too long, but some of the
 12 things we recommended we have all of this great
 13 information, all of the programs. Mandi was talking
 14 about one of the loan programs that we have for small
 15 businesses, and I can't stress enough that our small
 16 businesses need access to capital, and that's going to
 17 be one of our focuses on this coming year. But many of
 18 our small businesses, especially our minority, female,
 19 veteran-owned enterprises, don't know about many of the
 20 programs that we have. Think about, for instance, the
 21 Main Street program that went on last year. That was
 22 advertised nonstop around the clock on TV, radio and
 23 whatnot to get the word out that there's money available
 24 for your business. We've encouraged this committee, we
 25 have to work with you guys to help get that word out

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1 that here are opportunities for your business here in
 2 the State of Louisiana where you can benefit, you can
 3 prosper and you can grow, how we can work across the
 4 lines, not just partisan lines, but traditional
 5 divisions. You have to, to start a business, you have
 6 to go to the Secretary of State website, you have to the
 7 Department of Revenue's website, you have to go to
 8 procurement to get a contract. Is there a way we can
 9 make it easier with all of this fancy technology, and
 10 I'm looking at all of my friends on Zoom, how do we
 11 streamline that. Those are the sorts of recommendations
 12 we made, but the biggest one we're proud of is the
 13 Hudson Initiative and also our Bankers Association.
 14 What can we do to help, like, for instance, when small
 15 businesses go open up a commercial account or take out a
 16 loan, whether or not we can encourage our bankers to
 17 provide the information that, you know, here's a loan
 18 program from the state, here's an Angel Tax Credit
 19 application or here's some information for you that can
 20 perhaps help your business. How do we bridge those
 21 gaps, get it to those mom-and-pop businesses.
 22 And so we're excited about going forward.
 23 We're excited about the work that we've done, but
 24 there's a lot to do, and before I stop talking, the one
 25 thing we learned was that many of our businesses

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1 struggled to participate because they didn't keep up
 2 with the formalities or those formalities prevented them
 3 somehow from participating. While we know we just
 4 passed -- the Federal Government passed another stimulus
 5 at the end of the year and we're expecting the incoming
 6 administration to -- a deal is imminent, is my
 7 understanding, on a massive deal to send money, not just
 8 to the states and locals, but also to the businesses.
 9 Well, we know that those funds are coming, so let's get
 10 in on the front-end. Let's make sure, you know, this
 11 was a -- this started off as a study resolution, and
 12 let's study the impacts of COVID on these businesses.
 13 One of the things we learned was many of our
 14 businesses didn't participate in COVID relief programs
 15 because they didn't have the formalities in order.
 16 Let's fix that now. Let's help get the word out. I
 17 know you guys know a lot of people. Make sure you're up
 18 to date with the Secretary of State, figure out what you
 19 need from the Department of Revenue, let's -- whatever
 20 those hurdles and blocks are, let's knock them down now
 21 because there should be an opportunity to infuse some
 22 capital into the public real soon, into our businesses.
 23 So that's a lot for me to say. It's rare
 24 someone gives a politician the floor without any sort of
 25 limitations, so I'll gladly answer any questions that



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1 you-all may have, but it was great work, and the
 2 recommendations that we supported were virtually
 3 unanimous. In the State of Louisiana, it was -- in our
 4 legislature, the House, in particular, these were
 5 passing 93, 95, 100 to zero out of the House with broad
 6 up and down geographical political support. Those are
 7 all of our constituents, how do we improve our small
 8 businesses and grow the state.

9 So thank you-all for having me, and I'll
 10 gladly answer any questions that you-all may have.

11 MS. MITCHELL: Thank you for being here,
 12 Representative Carter.

13 Questions for Rep Carter on his work?
 14 Go ahead, Vince.

15 MR. HAYWOOD: First of all, Representative,
 16 I'd like to say that I'm so encouraged and optimistic
 17 about the work that you've just described. You know,
 18 it's just yet another example of smart government in
 19 action, so thank you for being a participant and
 20 obviously a leader in that.

21 When you say that -- and then secondly, it's
 22 always been my observation that, you know, small
 23 business -- small business fuels our economy, you know,
 24 both locally and internationally, so, as small business
 25 goes, so does our economy. So this is an important --

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1 this is an important subject for all of us in the
 2 business world without a doubt. And when you say that
 3 small, particularly disadvantaged businesses are
 4 struggling with formalities, I'm assuming you're talking
 5 about things like, you know, taxes and accounting and
 6 proper business licenses and registrations through the
 7 Secretary of State, et cetera. What's your sense --
 8 what's your gut on the best way to help correct that?
 9 What do you think it's going to take to help rectify
 10 that?

11 MR. CARTER: We need to streamline the
 12 process. We need to get rid of all of the red tape. I
 13 mean, it's just too easy to get out of -- to fall out of
 14 in line with all the formalities. That's one. There's
 15 too many formalities to start. But we had the secretary
 16 of -- and thank you for the question. You know, it's --
 17 I don't get to hear "smart government" often. So, you
 18 know, the fact that I'm involved in something that you
 19 consider "smart government," I'm pleased to be part of.
 20 But we had Secretary Robinson, the Secretary of Revenue,
 21 come testify how does her niece, who's starting a
 22 T-shirt company, go do business with the State of
 23 Louisiana. Well, to go start your business, you know,
 24 well, should she be an LLC, an S-corp, a C-corp? I'm a
 25 lawyer, I know those things, but typically, if you're

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1 starting a business for the first time, you don't know
 2 the answers to that. If there's no one in your
 3 household also owns a business, if you're the first
 4 person of your family that's starting your own company,
 5 should you be an LLC, a S-corp, C-corp, some other
 6 entity, very basic question.

7 Then you move beyond that, what's your NAICS
 8 code from your accounting standpoint? Just all of those
 9 technicalities, and then keeping up with that, keeping
 10 up with the Department of Revenue. And you think about
 11 that donut shop, that barber, that gym, that crossfit
 12 gym in my district, they're great at exercise, they're
 13 great at making donuts, they're great at being a barber,
 14 but they also have to master how this complex system of
 15 how do you start a business, how do you maintain a
 16 business. And that's even before you get to what really
 17 matters, and that is how does your small business get
 18 one of those state contracts.

19 If you ever go to our procurement website,
 20 it's great, it's just too much information. Just to
 21 streamline it where it's easy, and how do you simplify
 22 that whole process. So it's hard to say this is how we
 23 fix it, but it has to be fixed. And there's some
 24 urgency to it because we all know that more federal
 25 money is coming, and I don't want these formalities to

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1 get in the way of opportunity and access to cap and
 2 access to money and resources to those small businesses
 3 because you're right, that's how we grow our economy.
 4 If there's a local business in my district that's
 5 growing, chances are they're going to hire somebody
 6 right here in my area, and now there's going to be --
 7 that affects that family, that affects that kid, that
 8 affects that -- it's all related. That helps that
 9 grocery store, that helps that restaurant, that grows
 10 the whole economy, and it's cyclical and it feeds itself
 11 in a positive way. And we want to eliminate formalities
 12 that's getting in the way of that.

13 So thank you for the question, and sorry if
 14 I'm talking too long.

15 MS. MITCHELL: Any other questions?
 16 I see Courtney. Go ahead, Courtney.

17 MS. DAVIS: Thank you very much,
 18 Representative Carter, and believe me, you're not
 19 talking too long because all of us are very interested,
 20 and that's why we're part of this group is because we
 21 want this sort of information and truly appreciate it.

22 And it's funny that we're having this
 23 conversation today because just yesterday I was talking
 24 with a girlfriend of mine who has just started her own
 25 floral business, and so she came in delivering me these



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1 flowers yesterday and we sat down and kind of talked a
 2 little bit about, you know, how is everything going.
 3 And what we're talking about right now is exactly what
 4 she told me she is struggling with is "I don't know what
 5 to do. I don't know tax-wise what I'm supposed to be
 6 doing. Am I supposed to be paying myself?" Like she
 7 had all of these questions that are great questions, and
 8 I was like "I don't know what to tell you."
 9 And really my conversation with her was, you
 10 know, all of these great programs that are out there for
 11 business owners, but they're not start-ups, they're not
 12 really for the business owners that's a one person.
 13 Like you have Goldman Sachs, which is a great program, I
 14 went through Goldman Sachs' program, but she wouldn't
 15 qualify for that because she's not there yet. And I
 16 told her, I was like "I struggle with telling you where
 17 to go to get the best information where your business
 18 model and type of a one-person, you know, entity, is
 19 going to qualify for what's available out there."
 20 And so I certainly -- I know I struggle with
 21 that, and I feel like I am very highly in tune with the
 22 different organizations and what they have to offer for
 23 small business owners. And usually when I'm talking
 24 with a small business owner, "You need to talk to LED,"
 25 or "You need to talk to the Urban League," or "You need

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1 to talk to Goldman Sachs or WeBank or," you know, but
 2 there is that smaller group that is just starting out
 3 that is going to be very important for our economy and
 4 our communities that I don't really have a place to
 5 direct them. And so I'm happy the hear that we're
 6 working on that.
 7 And I know that I've kind of brought this
 8 before to this organization or to our group, and I know
 9 that this is kind of the beginning stages of it where
 10 we'll have, you know, LED a part of it, the Urban
 11 League, the NFIB, you know, kind of in one room, but I
 12 really want to reiterate the fact that you have many
 13 organizations, like PTAC, that have great programs, but
 14 it's like I have to get this from over here, I have to
 15 get this from over here, I have to get this from over
 16 here, and how to bring these great organizations of
 17 value together at like a one-stop shop for businesses to
 18 go to.
 19 And I know, Mandi, you were saying earlier
 20 something, and I don't know if this is kind of in line
 21 with that where you're working on something like that,
 22 and I appreciate that, because the one thing that you're
 23 talking about is the bidding process. And I know for
 24 me, as a business owner, we're looking at PTAC, so PTAC
 25 e-mails me what bids are out there. I have one

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1 organiz- -- one of our estimators is looking at WeBank
 2 and stuff they send to us for what bids are available
 3 out there. You have Lettermans, where I have another
 4 person on my staff, you know, seeing what's happening on
 5 Lettermans to see what bids are out there.
 6 I think PTAC does it probably best because
 7 they send it directly to me. It's like "These are your
 8 NAICS codes. This is what we see government work out
 9 there is in line with your NAICS codes. Take a look at
 10 these," because, you know, it's by NAICS code. And it's
 11 also by verbiage that's in the contract, so they'll kind
 12 of pull key words out of it as well. And some of it
 13 makes sense and some of it is not for me, but at least
 14 it saves me a lot of time in my very busy day of "Okay.
 15 I can look at PTAC at one point and I can see everything
 16 that they have scrubbed from vendors ops that they think
 17 is available for me to bid on."
 18 I want to see that expanded to also
 19 government -- not really government work, but commercial
 20 work to bring organizations, like the Audubon Zoo, that,
 21 you know, or LSU or Louisiana State, you know, just one
 22 place to go to try to figure out where my next business
 23 opportunity is for myself.
 24 And so that's two things, I know. It is the
 25 education of the startup that I see as an issue, and

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1 then the opportunity as a, you know, as a still small
 2 business, but, you know, I've been in business for 40
 3 years, I have 30 employees, I'm not there at the
 4 beginning stage, I still need help. And how, especially
 5 now, in a world where it's very difficult at this moment
 6 with everything with COVID, to get opportunities, how do
 7 I maximize my opportunities out there and where I'm
 8 going to find those opportunities and not have to go to
 9 so many different places to look for them while I am
 10 trying to run a business and work on what's my
 11 healthcare look like, you know, I want to add disability
 12 to my employees' benefits, and, you know, there's
 13 50-million other things that are on my plate in a day,
 14 but growth is very important for me to accomplish a lot
 15 of that.
 16 So I don't know where you go with that.
 17 MR. CARTER: Well, I'll be brief in
 18 responding. You know, that's a lot of what we heard.
 19 You know, that's a lot of what we heard, and when these
 20 recommendations came to the floor of the House of
 21 Representatives, people asked questions, you know, why
 22 is this committee needed, why is it needed to study the
 23 impact of COVID on minority, female and veteran-owned
 24 enterprises, can't we just look at all small businesses
 25 together. And one of the things that we pointed out is



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1 that female-owned enterprises, that not only are you
 2 dealing with COVID and everything else, but oftentimes
 3 you're having childcare issues that are unique to that
 4 business, there are personal issues that everyone has to
 5 deal with. Veterans, while dealing with all of the
 6 issues that veterans have been dealing with for years,
 7 now you put COVID on top of that and trying to maintain
 8 your business and do business with the State of
 9 Louisiana.

10 You talk about that complicated procurement
 11 process, so that's why we have this focus, and that's
 12 why we're giving attention. And we're glad to hear
 13 these stories, your stories and others, to figure out
 14 how do we fix it. And one of the things that, going to
 15 the first thing you said is when we have those
 16 solely-owned businesses or one or two persons starting a
 17 business, we have programs for that. I didn't know
 18 about them, you know, until we started going through
 19 this process, and one of the things we're trying to do
 20 is how do we get access to like those programs that
 21 Mandi has in her office with LED on that's dedicated for
 22 small business that want to start up, or like there are
 23 programs available for QuickBooks; right, you know, how
 24 do you work QuickBooks, you know. There's a program
 25 that we have at LED for that. Well, how do we let that

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1 local person who owns that donut shop who doesn't
 2 necessarily go to all of the chamber meetings, not
 3 following us on social media, not living this world,
 4 they're in a world of making donuts or widgets or
 5 whatever it is they're making, how do we let them know
 6 that "Here, let us, let's make it easier for you, and
 7 here's an opportunity. We'll show you what you need.
 8 Here's some programs just for you." Or when you go to
 9 these websites, you know, we can provide them
 10 information, such as you're starting a business and you
 11 don't know what type you want to be, well, 90 percent --
 12 there's a 90 percent chance it's going to be an LLC, you
 13 know. We can say those things or help figure out how to
 14 help people answer those questions without necessarily
 15 giving them legal advice. And, of course, where do you
 16 go to have one central place for information, how do we
 17 streamline this process, how do we make it easier,
 18 because the more hurdles you have, the more barriers in
 19 place, someone's going to get discouraged, someone's not
 20 going to complete that application, someone's going to
 21 leave money on the table, and that leaves resources on
 22 the table, that leaves opportunity on the table, that's
 23 lost economic growth on the table, that's lost changing
 24 someone's family off the table. So we have to figure
 25 out how do we get these resources to the people who need

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1 them the most in a way that can grow our economy and
 2 grow these businesses for the betterment of all of us,
 3 you know.

4 So, no, I hear you loud and clear.
 5 MS. DAVIS: I'm pretty loud. Thank you.
 6 MS. MITCHELL: Thank you for that.
 7 We do need to stay on track, members, so be
 8 mindful of your questions or comments. I'm trying to be
 9 respectful of your time as well.

10 Courtney, excellent, excellent comments. I
 11 will just tell you stay tuned. We talked about
 12 SourceLink, which is a resource mapping tool that LED
 13 has been hard at work in implementing. LSBEC and SCORE
 14 are excellent partners of LED for that one-stop shop
 15 startup company. I take calls all day from legislators,
 16 "I got a lady who makes cakes. She wants to start a
 17 business. She doesn't know where to go," and so we have
 18 intermediaries and partners that we refer them to.

19 I also want to point out one last thing.
 20 Representative Carter's very own, one of the out chutes
 21 of this work of this subcommittee is the HR 44 task
 22 force. It is everybody who has anything to do with
 23 procurement or to do with the GeauxBiz portal. We have
 24 had a number of very long meetings as groups looking at
 25 how can we streamline the portal. When somebody goes

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1 there and they doesn't know anything about a North
 2 American Industry Classification code, what is that,
 3 we're streamlining the process.

4 So thank you for lighting that fire,
 5 Representative Carter. We are on it.

6 I see two members that have comments, and
 7 then, so that we're respectful of everybody's time, we
 8 are going to have to move from this segment, but Vice
 9 Chair Tucker, I think raised her hand wanting to chime
 10 in, and then Angelica Rivera.

11 MS. TUCKER: Hey, y'all. Hey, Mandi. I
 12 will be very quick. I want to thank Mr. Carter for
 13 everything in our entire discussion. Everything has
 14 been so on point, especially when it comes to insurance
 15 and all of that kind of stuff and access to the
 16 marketplace.

17 Two things that I just want to quickly,
 18 quickly touch on. One is going back to that Main Street
 19 Grant program. The issues that you said are on point
 20 about, you know, there's a lot of businesses that don't
 21 have access to the certain things that they need to meet
 22 the requirements or that back office that's necessary.
 23 I want to make sure that we understand also, though,
 24 that there are a lot of businesses that do have that
 25 back office, that do have the years in business, that do



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1 have their papers in order that were unable to get
 2 access to these moneys that really would have been very
 3 helpful during the time, especially at the beginning of
 4 the pandemic. Even when you had -- and I apologize for
 5 how loud it is where I'm at. Even if you had everything
 6 together, there still seems to be an innocuous point of
 7 "We don't understand why we weren't getting the grant.
 8 I gave you everything that you said, we listened to the
 9 seminars, we turned everything in," and somehow there's
 10 a formula on the other side of this that nobody quite
 11 understands how you're being judged on. So that's one
 12 thing that I definitely want to make sure that we get
 13 out there.

14 Two -- and, I mean, there was a lot of
 15 businesses, and especially minority-owned businesses,
 16 that don't understand why we are were eligible for so
 17 many other things, so many other more complicated
 18 programs, and somehow didn't make the cut on the Main
 19 Street program.

20 Second thing I want to touch on very
 21 quickly, emergency contracting, when it comes to the
 22 beginning of the pandemic when federal dollars are
 23 coming quickest and the spigot is on full blast from the
 24 feds and the State of Louisiana relaxing -- I understand
 25 emergency procurement, I understand it very well from

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1 the federal level, from the state level and the local
 2 local level. The thing that was most disappointing with
 3 me, even with the strides we've made and all of the work
 4 that this committee has done, all of the work that the
 5 legislators have done, somehow when emergency
 6 contracting of certain NAICS codes of certain
 7 deliveries, of certain services, turning off the
 8 requirements when it comes to Hudson Initiative and
 9 minority-owned and turning off the push when the money
 10 is at its biggest flow, when the companies that are
 11 applying for those emergency contracts know that they're
 12 going to gross and they're going to make more money than
 13 they ever did before, they have more incentive to get
 14 hustling and to find and to utilize diverse suppliers
 15 that they already have relationships if they're doing
 16 business the right way.

17 So I understand certain circumstances,
 18 hospitals, things like that, COVID tests, that's
 19 different, you're not going to find those suppliers, but
 20 in other areas where you're building hospitals overnight
 21 or there's certain infrastructure needs and there's
 22 certain -- all kind of different supply issues where you
 23 have a supply chain and a built-out network that LED has
 24 worked to develop, that somehow the dialogue between the
 25 agency letting it, whether it's DOA or whoever, or

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1 finance or whoever, that dialogue is not there. So I
 2 just think it's a bad example to continue setting where
 3 you relax these requirements for certain industries
 4 ahead of the letting when we know that the spigot is on
 5 faster and you have more incentive by these large
 6 companies to be able to use small businesses.

7 MR. CARTER: Listen, we're adamant that, you
 8 know, when those emergency contracts are let, then those
 9 contracts should reflect the State of Louisiana, those
 10 should go to local minority, female, veteran, small,
 11 rural businesses in the State of Louisiana. And one of
 12 the things that we're looking for immediately, one of
 13 our last hearings on the committee of minority, female
 14 and veteran-owned enterprises was with DOTD, and Paula,
 15 I can't think of her last name, was the person at DOTD
 16 who presented, and one of the things we're looking at
 17 immediately coming up is emergency contracts and the
 18 letting of that.

19 And let me go back and talk about the very
 20 first thing you raised is those formalities. We agree
 21 with that as well. One of things that this committee
 22 recommended and is, I believe is House Resolution either
 23 47 or 48 that we passed, is that when we, the
 24 legislature, when these laws are being drafted, when we
 25 get the opportunity to send those sorts of resources,

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1 like the Main Street program, to our businesses, that we
 2 do so in a way that eliminates those formalities. When
 3 you look at Senate Bill 189 that form the Main Street
 4 program and you look at the complexity of that law and
 5 all the things that a business must do in order to
 6 participate in that, why are we adding anything beyond
 7 what the federal government would require? Let's not
 8 add any sort of formalities on top of an already
 9 complicated process, that any money coming from the
 10 federal government, from the CARES program, or any
 11 future money coming from a federal program, they already
 12 have federal rules in place. We shouldn't, as the
 13 legislature or the State of Louisiana, shouldn't put any
 14 sort of complexity on top of that. We have to make it
 15 as easy as possible to make sure that those resources
 16 can flow to the people who need it the most, especially
 17 when you know those businesses are being
 18 disproportionately affected by the disaster, by COVID,
 19 by the pandemic.

20 And I can't tell you the countless meetings
 21 that we've had with the Governor regarding emergency
 22 contracts and the studying the procurement and how those
 23 things happen, and I agree that we have to make certain
 24 that when we have those emergency contracts, we are
 25 making certain that minority, female and veteran-owned



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1 enterprises are absolutely included in that process.
 2 So thank you for those comments.
 3 MS. TUCKER: Thank you, sir, for your work.
 4 I appreciate you.
 5 MR. CARTER: Thank you.
 6 MS. MITCHELL: Thank you.
 7 Angelica, and then we're going to move on to
 8 our next agenda item.
 9 MS. RIVERA: Okay. So basically I was going
 10 to echo Courtney on how great it is to be a small
 11 business here in Louisiana with all of the programs and
 12 everything that is out there for businesses.
 13 Something that I was thinking that it might
 14 work is like a mentorship program because I feel that I
 15 have the capacity to have a small business, that I can
 16 not only guide them through the different programs that
 17 are out there, but also do a followup with them. So I
 18 think there should be like a mentorship program created
 19 with different stages where I'm able to have a small
 20 business and I might need support from another business
 21 that has the capacity that -- I mean, that have been
 22 through what I'm going through and that I can get some
 23 help. So some type of program like that where it will
 24 be really helpful for everyone, and you just sign in and
 25 kind of go through what the -- I mean, that's something

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1 that has been on my mind forever because I have small
 2 companies that come to me, and I feel like I can help
 3 them and guide them through the incubator that we have
 4 and kind of help them and guide them through the
 5 different programs that are out there, but also, at the
 6 same time, I do need help from other companies that are
 7 bigger than me and that can give us some advice.
 8 And another thing that I want to talk to is
 9 the capital, different cash flow information for smaller
 10 companies too, and I think last week I found out about
 11 this great program that they have here in New Orleans,
 12 it's called Build NOLA Mobilization Fund. I think that
 13 was the greatest idea that they ever come up with
 14 because they help the small companies, they don't have
 15 to -- they can work with the government. One of the
 16 biggest I think things that people are afraid of with
 17 small companies is it takes so long to get paid. Even a
 18 month or a month and a half, that's a lot when you're a
 19 small company, but when you have programs like this,
 20 like the Build NOLA Mobilization Fund, I thought that
 21 was a great idea because that gives the -- it takes five
 22 days for them to get paid whenever they submit an
 23 invoice, and then when the contractor or suppliers are
 24 sent the money, they pay directly to this fund. So I
 25 think that that's something that should be implemented

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1 at others -- at state levels.
 2 MR. CARTER: No. Listen, I like both of
 3 those ideas. I do. You know, a mentorship and, you
 4 know -- listen, I'm a small business owner myself, and
 5 having delays in how long, you know, you get a contract,
 6 you know the moneys coming, but you have to float
 7 operations, float your expenses while you're waiting for
 8 it, how do you survive that, and any opportunities to
 9 help those businesses, yeah, that's a wonderful program.
 10 And, look, a mentorship program, you know, I
 11 know I help people who I call and say how do you do this
 12 and how do you do that, and in working together, I know
 13 one --
 14 MS. RIVERA: And it's just unofficially. I
 15 mean, they know that someone is actually looking up and
 16 make sure that you're going to go through the right
 17 path, so I think that would be helpful.
 18 MR. CARTER: Yes. I agree.
 19 MS. MITCHELL: Thank you for that, Angelica.
 20 That's what we're here to do is to develop
 21 recommendations that we can then act upon to make our
 22 state a much better place for small businesses.
 23 So before we move on, I want to do something
 24 that I failed to do at the beginning of the meeting,
 25 which is to introduce everyone to our new member, Ms.

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1 Zell Dudley. Zell Dudley is the owner of Dudley
 2 Worldwide, who provides healthcare and household
 3 products to individual consumers and to commercial
 4 consumers as well, and, also, Zell brings to us a
 5 one-two punch. She is the Director of Economic
 6 Development at the Port of Caddo-Bossier.
 7 So, Zell, welcome aboard. We are so excited
 8 to have you, and I apologize for failing to introduce
 9 you at the beginning of my presentation, so thank you.
 10 MS. DUDLEY: Thank you, Mandi, and I'm
 11 excited just for an opportunity to participate in this
 12 council, just honored for the appointment, and I'm happy
 13 to be here and happy to serve. Thank you.
 14 MS. MITCHELL: All right. Thank you very
 15 much.
 16 We will move on to our next agenda item.
 17 Checking with Sonja, thus far, no public comments. Just
 18 reported that out to the group.
 19 Our next guest -- well, not guest, but the
 20 President, actually, of the council, who I serve as his
 21 designee, Secretary Don Pierson is here with us to talk
 22 about the Resilient Louisiana Commission and all things
 23 LED. So I'm turning it over to you, Secretary.
 24 SECRETARY PIERSON: Thank you, Mandi. And,
 25 Mandi and I want it strictly noted for the record that



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1 LED was not the administrator of the Main Street
 2 program, and we have been proud to serve in that role,
 3 but that program was administered by another wing of
 4 government. And we'll leave it at that.

5 I can make my report very short by just
 6 acknowledging everything that Representative Carter has
 7 put on the table and go to a one-word report, which
 8 would be "Amen" because you can quickly see why he is
 9 such a recognized leader for small business in our state
 10 and knows his topics backwards and forward. I sense he
 11 lives it to some degree, which gives him an even greater
 12 understanding, and I share that background. At one
 13 point in my career I ran a small business, and it's just
 14 a tremendous weight on your shoulders to make that
 15 payroll and to be doing all of these things that are so
 16 critical.

17 I want to try to move quickly. I think that
 18 I have enough material to speak to you for 45 minutes or
 19 an hour, but we won't do that today out of respect for
 20 everybody's time, but you may want to take a few notes
 21 along the way. I want to thank each of you for your
 22 participation in the important work of this council, and
 23 thank you for those kind remarks, Courtney, relative to
 24 the service rendered by this great staff we have at
 25 Louisiana Economic Development. But more than your time

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1 and attention, what I see reflected across the members
 2 of this council and on this call is your passion for all
 3 of this, and we want to fuel that passion, we want to
 4 harness that passion and we want your time to be
 5 productive. And by that, I mean we're not just
 6 gathering here today to have a great conversation,
 7 although we will, but we are driving a series of action
 8 items and we're also sharing a great deal of
 9 information, and so if you needed to have some notes or
 10 something to kind of keep up with that, then I encourage
 11 it.

12 I would also tell you a lot of this is
 13 embedded on our OpportunityLouisiana.com website, but
 14 due to spam laws, something that you may not know, you
 15 have go to that website, and on the microsities that are
 16 there, opt in for information to be provided to you so
 17 that you get our media releases. We have a new setup
 18 there for our rural communities that we have a focus on,
 19 and you need to opt into "I want to get the updates
 20 relative to what's happening in our rural stakeholder
 21 communities out there." So just make a note to be sure
 22 that you're opted in. Don't go away feeling like we
 23 have a conversation and then you never hear from LED
 24 again. You know, we'd love to be sharing as much
 25 information as possible, but you need to opt in for

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1 that.

2 Representative Carter made some great
 3 points, and it is hard for us to reach out and engage
 4 all the small businesses across our 64 parishes, a very
 5 small department an important segment of our workforce
 6 focused on small businesses entrepreneurship, but what
 7 we do, and we want to continue to build with on this, is
 8 we have a powerful network of chambers across our state.
 9 And why those are a great connection point for us -- and
 10 Kelisha's nodding her head. Thank you Kelisha -- is
 11 that these organizations are directly in touch with a
 12 large number of small businesses, so providing a reach
 13 out to, say, 47 chambers, they've got more than 100
 14 members or so, all of a sudden we've gotten word out to
 15 5,000 small businesses or more across our state. So we
 16 can continue to appreciate this important partnership.
 17 It's a linkage that we have built in this administration
 18 of Governor Edwards with the new focus on small
 19 business.

20 Always great to be landing those big
 21 companies and great to hear about 500 jobs and those
 22 kinds of things. That's important work that we do.
 23 It's also important that we service our existing
 24 industry in our state where 60 percent or more of new
 25 job creation will come and the growth and reinvestment

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1 that we need from them, but none of these are possible
 2 without that important network of small businesses
 3 around them to either give them the service and products
 4 and things that they need to run the plant or to build
 5 that quality of life for the workforce that the
 6 corporation seeks to recruit and retain here. So we get
 7 it. We get it that small business is critically
 8 important to the entire efforts of our state to grow a
 9 vibrant economy.

10 So one very, very important thing, as I
 11 listen here today, we hear that cry for assistance, and
 12 it takes a lot of different shapes and forms. Maybe
 13 just as a way of thinking, like a deck of cards, if I
 14 spread it out and we had 52 cards, I feel like at LED we
 15 probably have 52 or more support lanes that are out
 16 there for small businesses. They lead over to the SBA,
 17 to our small business development centers, they are on
 18 our community college campuses, they're on our four-year
 19 university campuses, they're with the veterans systems,
 20 and we can go on and on. It's critical that we continue
 21 to provide the education to the small businesses across
 22 our state of where these linkages exist and how they can
 23 access these programs.

24 Well, here it comes. Drum roll, please.
 25 Here's some exciting new activity that you're going to



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1 see unfolding that's going to be a great solution for a
 2 lot of this cry for assistance that's coming from our
 3 small businesses. Early in this pandemic, in
 4 Washington, DC, they passed the CARES Act, and a feature
 5 of the CARES Act was \$1.5-billion being allocated to the
 6 economic development administration. That's a subset of
 7 the Federal Department of Commerce. We saw that
 8 1.5-billion on the radar screen and said "Oh, wow.
 9 Okay. They're going to take that money, they're going
 10 to break it up across six regional headquarters in the
 11 United States, ours is in Austin, Texas, and LED is
 12 going to go after a section of that money and bring it
 13 home to support our small businesses." Not bring it
 14 home to support LED, but bring it home as a conduit to
 15 get it out to our small businesses.
 16 And in a competition, we've been
 17 successfully awarded \$2-million that we're going to
 18 bring to small businesses across our state for technical
 19 assistance. That's what you've been talking about here.
 20 "I've got these formalities that I need to clear up.
 21 How do I do that? What do I do?" And so for
 22 organizations like Kelisha's, and we have been in the
 23 process of identifying, and I think we've now got -- and
 24 Pat can help me put it in the chat room, but I think
 25 we've got more than 46 organizations that have indicated

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1 their willingness to organize technical assistance.
 2 What do I mean by that? Well, something
 3 that they can do is, just like we're scheduling
 4 vaccines, now schedule appointments for small businesses
 5 to come in to a central location. It may be a chamber,
 6 but it doesn't have to be. It could be a community
 7 center. It could be a lot of places. At that location,
 8 we can have an array of people that you need to
 9 interface with as a small business with an issue. Maybe
 10 that's a CPA and you want to talk to them about taxes.
 11 These large corporations have CPAs and attorneys for
 12 days; okay, but a small business owner doesn't have
 13 access to those kind of resources very readily, or, if
 14 they chose to access those resources, they're expensive.
 15 So you can come into a one-stop shop with an
 16 appointment and talk to a CPA. Or maybe it's a business
 17 attorney, maybe you've got some legal issues you want to
 18 talk about, or maybe it's a banker, maybe you need to
 19 know elements about what programs are available and
 20 which ones should I choose or I have this much debt,
 21 should I take on more debt. These expertise providers
 22 can be assembled under a location and provide a wide
 23 range of opportunity out there for small businesses.
 24 How do we get those bankers and CPAs and
 25 others to come in and spend their time? With the

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1 \$2-million that we're parceling out, we can pay them 50
 2 or 60 or whatever the correct rate is per hour to come
 3 and participate in these activities. So they're not
 4 like you're trying to drive volunteers in and all of a
 5 sudden got busy and don't show up. This will be a
 6 program that we can manage and execute that can bring
 7 some very important relief out there.
 8 We've gone out with a survey and asked
 9 specifically for identification of what the primary
 10 needs are for our small businesses across the State.
 11 We've got those results back. They're being collated.
 12 We have to do parts of this to satisfy federal audit
 13 regulations. We'll be looked at very carefully on how
 14 we handle the federal government's \$2-million and gave
 15 it to these qualified agencies that are capable of
 16 pushing out and managing and orchestrating technical
 17 assistance for small businesses. We've got those
 18 service providers initially identified now, and we're in
 19 the process of crafting the templates to get into their
 20 hands relative to making these awards and being able to
 21 disperse these funds to hopefully be able to triage a
 22 whole lot of small businesses out there and be
 23 responsive to that cry you've been talking about today,
 24 "I need help and just don't know the right resources to
 25 get it." So we're very excited and engaged there.

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1 A few other things before I go. That was a
 2 real primary that's in mid air, but well along its
 3 pathway. Great partnership with PTAC. Their name's
 4 been mentioned on this call a number of times. They're
 5 so successful that we've also sort of replicated that
 6 formula and stood up on the Nicholls campus. CTAC,
 7 which will be the Coastal Technical Assistance program,
 8 designed to also connect veteran, woman, minority-owned
 9 businesses with the \$1-billion that the CPRA is managing
 10 on behalf of the State of Louisiana where all of this
 11 coastal and restoration work is being done. And that's
 12 not just to say that it's backhoes and bulldozers.
 13 There's engineering work, there's all kinds of work
 14 that's associated with this.
 15 So PTAC has conducted more than 50 seminars
 16 typically in a year. They are moving around. They are
 17 trying to be accessible, but we're stretched thin. Just
 18 even to secure that \$2-million grant from the federal
 19 government, we had to provide from the state's
 20 perspective, from LED's contribution \$600,000.
 21 Everybody's operating on very, very tight budgets. We
 22 understand that the state's going into a tough budget
 23 cycle already. I've had my meeting with Jay Dardenne.
 24 We've worked out where LED will be taking \$2.25-million
 25 out of our budget. We can do that. It doesn't help us



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1 expand programs like the ones that we're talking about
 2 here today. It would be very harmful for even more
 3 significant cuts to come our way, but that's just
 4 something that Representative Carter and others are
 5 going to have to help us with.

6 We're very excited that -- again, don't have
 7 time for everything on this call, but not just PTAC and
 8 CTAC, but you talked about the Hudson Initiative that we
 9 have stressed, and we held an entire Small Business
 10 program in Shreveport before things got really tough
 11 with COVID and such to have basically a whole array of
 12 service providers that were looking to build their
 13 Hudson Initiative participation. And our numbers, due
 14 to COVID, are up significantly now. I think we had a 40
 15 percent increase in the number of contracts and business
 16 transactions that we had with Hudson Initiative
 17 companies.

18 Now, look, that's not putting up a mission
 19 accomplished sign. That's just to say we need to keep
 20 pushing. We will keep pushing, but we're making some
 21 progress in that lane. And one of the things you've got
 22 to do is have those metrics to be looking at it and
 23 advocating to expand those opportunities, and that's
 24 exactly what we're doing.

25 I heard rural mentioned a couple times on

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1 the call here today again. Very important directive
 2 that we're working on. That's not a Louisiana issue.
 3 That's happening across the nation. That's happening
 4 across the South. Very challenging environments in the
 5 rural settings. But we are, I think, have been
 6 long-term great stewards in our rural communities, but
 7 we're going to call more attention to the needed
 8 resources there, of course, broadband, and there's
 9 another wing of government that's working those
 10 important issues. And, look, broadband is not just a
 11 rural element. You've got what I'll call a digital
 12 desert in Metropolitan areas where underserved
 13 communities don't really have ready access to the
 14 internet and to the robust futures needed there and
 15 needed for distance learning when kids can't go to
 16 school, needed for telemedicine, the way that medicine
 17 will move and makes a lot of sense in terms of better
 18 outcomes for the patient, better outcomes for the state
 19 and insurance companies, and the cost of delivering
 20 medicine. And then finally, of course, e-commerce,
 21 which this is the new day. All right? Commerce will be
 22 changed going forward. Not to say that let's not go
 23 back to many of the small business activities that we've
 24 had and enjoyed, but Main Street is going to be a
 25 different place. And so that digital storefront, the

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1 ways that small businesses can reach out to their client
 2 base and engage them, whether it's a text message coming
 3 from a nail salon or what have you, this is the new day,
 4 there's ways, and LED has been providing pathways to
 5 engage that to grow and strengthen our small businesses.
 6 So we're excited about the opportunity that we have.

7 Flipping the page a little bit, we can go
 8 into talking about a pretty successful year that LED's
 9 had with the backdrop of COVID, even with the backdrop
 10 of five storms, even with the backdrop of the total
 11 devastation of Southwest Louisiana, we've got some great
 12 news to report relative to new companies recruited and
 13 other metrics that we've met. Also very importantly the
 14 game plan for Resilient Louisiana. LED worked with my
 15 coach here, Terrie Sterling, and have come up with, I
 16 want to direct your attention to it, it's at the
 17 website, OpportunityLouisiana.com/ResilientLouisiana,
 18 but a fantastic game plan to drive our state forward.

19 And, again, not enough time to really spend with you
 20 today on all the elements of it, but let me try to get
 21 it on the camera here. Anyway, the critical feature of
 22 this, I want you to know, is on Page 33 of the Executive
 23 Summary under Small Business and Entrepreneurship, we're
 24 advocating for this council's work to be adopted,
 25 increase entrepreneurship, education and mentoring and

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1 build upon LED's economic gardening successes, and also
 2 the pathways are laid out by the entrepreneurship and
 3 small business council. So we're excited.

4 As you can see, we have some passion for
 5 this at LED, and we're very proud of our work, but,
 6 again, it's only made possible by this strong network
 7 that we've established with all of these different
 8 providers and stakeholders, Bryan's team over there and
 9 small business development centers. That's a federal
 10 partnership. LED puts up a million dollars and the
 11 federal government puts up a million dollars to operate
 12 these centers all over the state, and it's kind of very
 13 much incumbent upon us. And Pat Witty's team is
 14 here, you see Stephanie and others on the call here
 15 today, we are constantly educating and reaching out to
 16 make sure people know about the programs and take
 17 advantage of the programs. If we have this
 18 award-winning toolbox of small business programs that
 19 can help a small business be successful and they're not
 20 utilized, then we don't move the needle on building that
 21 vibrant economy that we all know is so important to the
 22 future of our state, the future of our children, the
 23 future of our grandchildren.

24 So those are the general thoughts that I
 25 have to share with you today. Again, I would love to



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1 walk you through both the Resilient Louisiana
 2 Commission's very, very important work that embraces
 3 diversity, embraces equity, and clearly points out that
 4 these are requirements to a strong economy going
 5 forward, to walk you through the accomplishments of 2020
 6 and some of the things that we got on the radar screen
 7 going forward into 2021, but most important was to share
 8 with you this technical assistance grant that's going to
 9 be impactful, powerful in all parts of our state, and
 10 I'm really anticipating that it's going to have great
 11 results for our small business community.
 12 Thank you for your time today.
 13 MS. MITCHELL: Thank you for that
 14 comprehensive and robust update, Secretary Pierson.
 15 I'm trying to honor everybody's time. I'll
 16 tell you, when we were looking at the agenda, we didn't
 17 fathom being butting up against lunchtime, so I'm sorry
 18 about this to our members.
 19 Any quick questions for Secretary Pierson
 20 before we move on to the next agenda item?
 21 (No response.)
 22 MS. MITCHELL: Okay. I don't see any hands
 23 going up. All right. Good deal.
 24 Our next agenda item is it's labeled as
 25 roundtable for LSBEC members. What I wanted to do, what

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1 we wanted to do in this segment, if you recall, my
 2 comments earlier, for the 2021 report, our
 3 recommendation from the team at LED is to restate the
 4 2020 recommendations. Those are still very relevant, if
 5 anything, more relevant now that we have all, we all are
 6 coming out on the other side of the pandemic, and we've
 7 seen the impact to small businesses. So we'll use this
 8 segment, if you-all don't mind, to if there are any
 9 other recommendations that you'd like to put on the
 10 table for research or implementation in addition to what
 11 we have identified for access to capital, occupational
 12 licensing reform and regulatory reform, and the floor is
 13 open for the LSBEC members to chime in. And I'm sorry.
 14 Also we have very robust recommendations as it pertains
 15 to Hudson and Veterans Initiative program enhancements.
 16 Those still remain on the table, and we are pushing very
 17 hard against those as well.
 18 Courtney.
 19 MS. DAVIS: I have a question, Mandi, about
 20 what you want at this moment. So you're just looking
 21 for stuff that are kind of in line with what we already
 22 have on the table, nothing new?
 23 MS. MITCHELL: Well, yeah, that's right.
 24 Any -- actually anything new. I'm sorry. So anything
 25 above and beyond what we have already identified as

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1 areas that we would like to focus on and make
 2 recommendation to the department, and some may require
 3 legislation. So anything --
 4 MS. DAVIS: Okay. I don't know if you
 5 noticed what I put in the chat earlier about emergency
 6 dollars being spent.
 7 MS. MITCHELL: Yes. I saw that, and I
 8 actually jotted it down.
 9 MS. DAVIS: Okay. I'll try to keep this as
 10 quick as possible. Just in my -- and I'm sure in
 11 everyone's industry, they have other things that they're
 12 dealing with. When there's an emergency disaster and/or
 13 federal or state funds are being given to an
 14 organization, like, say, in my case, it was McNeese
 15 State University, those dollars need to be spent in
 16 state, and the issues started where they hired an
 17 architect from out of state. If you hire an architect
 18 from out of state, you're automatically going to be
 19 looking at getting vendors to finish that project from
 20 out of state. They're going to write the contract in a
 21 manner in which local businesses cannot compete or are
 22 not given the same advantages. Case in point for us,
 23 they took one of our competitors out of Texas, so
 24 started with an architect out of state, took our
 25 competitor from out of Texas, allotted for them to

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1 understand the bid prior to us even getting information
 2 on the bid, then wrote the contract in a manner that was
 3 specifically almost written for them to get the bid as a
 4 sub on this job. I mean, it was unfair from start to
 5 finish. They had many Louisiana contractors bidding on
 6 this project. It was 15 different buildings,
 7 \$22-million was the amount. Every single one of the
 8 contracts went to out-of-state contractors. That can't
 9 happen.
 10 When there is a disaster that's happening in
 11 the State of Louisiana and the State of Louisiana is
 12 giving funds to an organization inside of the State of
 13 Louisiana, it can't just benefit that organization in
 14 the State of Louisiana. It also has to benefit the
 15 business owners in the state that are suffering as well.
 16 There needs to be more opportunity for that, and I don't
 17 want to take up too much time. I know we don't have a
 18 lot of time, but I have a lot of ideas and opinions on
 19 that subject, so I just wanted to kind of put that out
 20 there.
 21 MS. MITCHELL: Yes. Thank you, Courtney.
 22 Duly noted. And trust me, this is not the first time
 23 that this complaint has been registered with LED or the
 24 Division of Administration or the Governor's Office of
 25 Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness. Duly



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1 noted, and what I think we can do is, in the near
 2 future, invite Office of State Procurement and GOHSEP to
 3 come and visit with us to have a discussion about that,
 4 but also to continue exploring the possibility, the
 5 legal possibility to either carve out or restrict a
 6 portion of those expenditures for in-state.

7 All right. So not to belabor the point here
 8 today, Mr. Greenwood, I see your hand up.

9 MR. GREENWOOD: Yeah. Thanks. I have two
 10 points. The first, in light of what Representative
 11 Carter talked about and in light of capital access as
 12 being one, in light of what we have discovered working
 13 with clients post-Coronavirus and disasters, will there
 14 be any expansion of research as it relates to capital
 15 access to those underserved woman-owned, minority-owned,
 16 veteran-owned businesses? You know, the biggest
 17 challenge we found were those that were less than
 18 one-year-old companies, because of the way the PPP was
 19 written, technology companies that don't have hard,
 20 tangible assets, but it's all intellectual property,
 21 couldn't access some of the programs, hence why I sent
 22 the e-mail to Stephanie regarding venture capital
 23 perspective and the Mezzanine lending. And then the
 24 Schedule C gig economy independent 1099 contractors also
 25 struggled because of the fact that they're in between,

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1 you know, am I an employee, am I a business owner,
 2 things of that nature.

3 We found, you know, a big gap in the clients
 4 that we serve that fit those categories were not able to
 5 touch access capital, and I think, you know, if there's
 6 any expansion to the research that the department does,
 7 which you guys do a great job in your research, might
 8 want to expand it. Just to let you know, I have to
 9 write a report to SBA, and in my research shows that the
 10 State of Louisiana received 5.5-billion, 5.5-billion in
 11 capital to small businesses. That's not -- that's
 12 including PPP at 150,000 or less. I did not include the
 13 150,000 or greater because then it would be an
 14 astronomical number. So if we could add some kind of
 15 caveat to future research of the impact of those types
 16 of companies.

17 The second point is -- shhhh, I'm not saying
 18 it -- June 1st will be around the corner, but every year
 19 at this time I talk about it, that's hurricane season.
 20 We got smacked by three. Our group is still struggling
 21 with the folks that are impacted with that. One of the
 22 biggest challenges with COVID was the fact that we
 23 couldn't -- we had to work virtually and everything had
 24 to be online, and one of the things that I was
 25 mentioning in meetings, you know, back when, was the

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1 fact that what if. And my job as a former banker is
 2 risk management and finding ways to mitigate risks, you
 3 know, what happens when you have a pandemic and
 4 everybody's working virtually and you have these two
 5 storms coming in, then you have no electricity, no
 6 water, no internet, you know, how do you deal with that?
 7 I mean, we, you know, voiced our opinion and local, we
 8 were able to establish one small, you know, in only
 9 three weeks, a business recovery center in Lake Charles.
 10 But, you know, I think there's something to look at.
 11 You know, I go way back, as you may know, to Hurricane
 12 Katrina. I've been around a long time in this
 13 organization, and there was a lot of debriefing and a
 14 lot of research being done on after action, you know,
 15 your requirements. And I know it happens all the time
 16 in public safety. You know, that's how the Business
 17 Emergency Operations Centers came about, you know.

18 So one of the things we, you know, might
 19 want to look at is, you know, what are the lessons
 20 learned, good, bad or indifferent, and how to respond to
 21 COVID, how to respond to Laura, Delta and now Beta,
 22 because there's some definitely nuggets of information
 23 in there and wisdom that we could learn from. So I
 24 don't know if that's something that embodies with what
 25 this committee, you know, is, but I'm already getting,

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1 you know, inquiries from the field, "It's January.
 2 June's coming up." You know, "What are we doing," you
 3 know, when it comes to business resiliency and recovery,
 4 when we are are still, you know, struggling with three
 5 storms and COVID.

6 That's all I wanted to mention. I'm happy
 7 to talk further in detail later on that.

8 MS. MITCHELL: Thank you, Bryan. I've got
 9 those noted.

10 And resiliency training, I'll tell you, I
 11 don't know if Pat Witty is still on the line, but since
 12 I first came on board at LED, and coming from working in
 13 the telecom industry in the private sector on the side
 14 being on the front lines and responding to emergency
 15 events that we're used to, the physical ones like
 16 hurricanes, there's just been always this emphasis on
 17 resiliency and how hard it is to get businesses of all
 18 sizes to be thinking, in peacetime or in good times, to
 19 be thinking about how to survive an emergency or
 20 disaster. But, anyway, duly noted. I have the research
 21 expansion under access to capital and resiliency.

22 Mr. Chairman, E.J. Krampe, your hand was up.
 23 (No response.)

24 MS. MITCHELL: Are you still there E.J.? I
 25 see you.



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1 (No response.)
 2 MS. MITCHELL: Okay. We'll move to Zell.
 3 Ms. Zell, I saw your hand up. And then we'll come back
 4 to the chairman because he does have something we'd like
 5 to also put on the table.
 6 MS. DUDLEY: Okay. Thank you. I will start
 7 just with a question first before it would potentially
 8 lead to a recommendation.
 9 We've talked about the Hudson Initiative and
 10 maybe any other programs that are out there that become
 11 leg- -- that are the result of legislation. In the
 12 past, so it's not current, but my experience with some
 13 of the state agencies, many of them, their procurement
 14 folks don't know about those initiatives, or that's what
 15 they would tell the businesses who are coming to try to
 16 leverage those businesses with those particular state
 17 agencies.
 18 So my question is how -- is there a
 19 mechanism to create that bridge to educate the state
 20 agencies, not who the businesses are, but that the
 21 program is there? And then, secondly, do those state
 22 agencies report on any of those respective programs, and
 23 is there performance or anything tied to it?
 24 MS. MITCHELL: There is. And, Zell, I have
 25 some documents that I can send to you to get you caught

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1 up on the progress that we have been able to make with
 2 the Hudson Initiative.
 3 Every year, at least since I've been at LED,
 4 but more noticeably and demonstrably since 2016, the
 5 state agencies have increased their purchasing through
 6 the Hudson Initiative in terms of absolute dollar value
 7 and percentages. So we can send you a report on that.
 8 MS. DUDLEY: Okay.
 9 MS. MITCHELL: The other thing is we have
 10 worked extensively with the Office of State Procurement,
 11 not only to set goals, but to address -- revisit those
 12 goals every year, but to educate the purchasing officers
 13 and the procurement agents at every state agency --
 14 MS. DUDLEY: Awesome. Okay.
 15 MS. MITCHELL: -- on the program. And we --
 16 that's one thing I don't mind doing. I think we should,
 17 but sometime this year, one of our meetings is have
 18 Jonathan Walker and potentially Ms. Paula Tregre from
 19 OSP to give you--all an update. But, yes, to answer that
 20 question, and we have a robust education program for all
 21 state agencies.
 22 MS. DUDLEY: Awesome. Thank you.
 23 MS. MITCHELL: Okay, E.J. Were you prepared
 24 to mention your discussion point, Mr. Chairman?
 25 MR. KRAMPE: Mandi, can you hear me?

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1 MS. MITCHELL: Yes. There we go. I can
 2 hear you now. We couldn't hear you a second ago.
 3 MR. KRAMPE: I don't know that this is the
 4 year to discuss this, but it's something that I think
 5 the committee needs to keep on their radar, and that is
 6 tax structure in Louisiana, especially for retail
 7 companies across the different parishes. It's extremely
 8 onerous to do business across multiple parishes and in
 9 the State of Louisiana.
 10 In addition, kind of dovetailing on what
 11 Secretary Pierson said with the new digital storefront
 12 and the way that those are going to work for a lot of
 13 people without having a brick and mortar, I think it
 14 becomes an even more important topic of conversation.
 15 So I think some sort of tax reform needs to be on our
 16 radar.
 17 MS. MITCHELL: Absolutely. And, you know,
 18 if it weren't for the limitation of time, I was going to
 19 ask our guest, Representative Carter, to give us a
 20 preview of what's to come before us during this session,
 21 and comprehensive tax reform is on the table, meaning
 22 all tax types, and the administration of sales tax in
 23 particular. So what I will do is make a note to perhaps
 24 invite Representative Carter back to visit with us, as
 25 well as the chairman of the tax committee, Senator

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1 Allain, and Rep Stuart Bishop, to come and share with us
 2 a preview on comprehensive tax reform that's being
 3 proposed for the upcoming session because I know that is
 4 of critical importance to small businesses.
 5 How does that sound?
 6 MR. KRAMPE: Thank you very much.
 7 MS. MITCHELL: The session starts April the
 8 12th, so we are -- what we'll do is try to set our
 9 second quarterly meeting sometime before that time and
 10 have a preview.
 11 Any other items that we'd like to put on the
 12 table for the 2021 report? And, mind you, we're going
 13 to move very quickly on that. We have to submit this
 14 report internally and to the legislature. So in
 15 addition to restating our 2020 recommendations, I'm
 16 going to summarize the items that have been mentioned
 17 and put on the table today, and we'll send that out to
 18 everyone for review and then reconvene the group to
 19 formally vote on the 2021 report of recommendations.
 20 And in honor of time, of everyone's time, we
 21 will move on from this agenda item. And I'm checking
 22 with Sonja, and I don't see any public comment. So what
 23 I wanted to do next is just briefly have Stephanie
 24 Hartmann touch on some high points of our LED Small
 25 Business Programming announcements, anything that



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1 you-all need to know that's on the horizon, and as
 2 you-all know, Stephanie Hartmann is the Director of our
 3 Small Business Team at LED.
 4 So, Ms. Stephanie.
 5 MS. HARTMANN: Thank you so much, Mandi.
 6 And I know that we're short on time, so I'll try and be
 7 pretty quick here, and I'll provide just some expansion
 8 on some of these topics to Mandi to share with you-all
 9 after the meeting as well.
 10 Before I get into the upcoming items, I just
 11 wanted to give a couple of bullet points on our team's
 12 activities in terms of response to COVID, and also some
 13 of the things that we had come out in 2020. The first
 14 is in specific response to some of the COVID
 15 environment, things that our businesses were facing.
 16 LED worked with our partner, the Edward Lowe Foundation,
 17 to provide a series of collaborative virtual roundtables
 18 and formal leadership retreats focused around challenges
 19 faced due to COVID-19, and also worked with Goldman
 20 Sachs' 10,000 Small Businesses Program at Delgado to
 21 provide a webinar series with some focus on COVID
 22 response specific items, as well as cyber security.
 23 And then I do want to give a shout out to
 24 Bryan, the Small Business Development Center.
 25 Throughout 2020 our team provided information to small

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1 businesses in our network about the newly-issued
 2 resources coming out and guidance that was provided by
 3 the SBA and others, but also connected them directly to
 4 our outstanding partners of the Small Business
 5 Development Centers Network, who, being well-seasoned in
 6 disaster response, as we talked a little bit about
 7 today, were able to provide them assistance through
 8 webinars individually what's happening into COVID-19,
 9 assistance in programming, as well as assisting small
 10 businesses across Southwest Louisiana facing recoveries
 11 from Hurricanes Delta and Laura.
 12 A new program launched through our Small
 13 Business Services group. We talked a little bit here
 14 about mentor/protege relationships. LED did launch the
 15 American Academy of Entrepreneurs. We were the first
 16 state in the nation to launch that program in
 17 partnership with the Edward Lowe Foundation, which
 18 combined a virtual retreat and six months of virtual
 19 meetings between mentoring second-stage companies and
 20 mentees to work on various aspects of their business
 21 growth trajectories, but that's a program that we're
 22 continuing and working on the next session of that in
 23 2021.
 24 We also in November launched the Pathway to
 25 Assist Veteran Entrepreneurs in partnership with the

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1 Small Business Development Center Network to provide
 2 support for our veterans that were interested in
 3 launching a new business.
 4 Most recently, in this past month, LED
 5 launched a Rural Entrepreneurship Initiative providing
 6 content tailored to support rural, second-stage
 7 companies through peer learning, strategic research.
 8 That's delivered both in group and one-on-one format
 9 done virtually. And we had various efforts throughout
 10 2020 as well that were taking and making sure that all
 11 of our small business programs were accessible through
 12 virtual format or otherwise throughout the COVID
 13 environment.
 14 And so just kind of briefly going through
 15 some of those things, obviously our Small and Emerging
 16 Business Development program that, Courtney, is one
 17 within the LED suite that is focused really on those
 18 early stage and just starting out businesses. We made
 19 sure that our roundtables trainings and one-on-one
 20 business assistance was accessible virtually for that
 21 program.
 22 Our Contractors Accreditation Institute,
 23 with the Community Technical College Systems, switched
 24 from an in-classroom delivery to being done wholly
 25 virtually, so that is still accessible, and we actually

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1 have registration for that program open currently for
 2 our upcoming general contractors seminar, which is going
 3 to be starting in February.
 4 Companies can continue to access Strategic
 5 Research program. We had 67 companies participate in
 6 engagements in 2020, and our CEO roundtables were able
 7 to be delivered virtually where needed with companies
 8 graduating in 2020.
 9 One of my big updates, as of right now, we
 10 will be having the application period for CEO
 11 roundtables for our next series. They're going to be
 12 opening on Monday, February 1st, so we're working and
 13 driving interested companies to apply, and we'll
 14 appreciate support in any outreach related to that
 15 program.
 16 And, of course, you know, all of our
 17 certification programs are made accessible through SBA.
 18 We had a lot of discussions today about the Hudson and
 19 Veteran Initiative. There was, and as Secretary Pierson
 20 alluded, a lot of this is due to COVID response, there
 21 was an increase of over \$39-million in expenditures in
 22 Fiscal Year 2020 over the expenditure with Hudson and
 23 Veteran-certified companies in FY '19.
 24 We're very excited to be able to promote the
 25 Expanded Small Purchases Executive Order that



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1 Representative Carter spoke to, and that resulted from
 2 their subcommittee's recommendation so that our small
 3 businesses can fully leverage that expanded opportunity
 4 and continue to work on some of the other items that
 5 were discussed in the meeting today.

6 Last two updates, just as Mandi mentioned,
 7 we've also been working with SourceLink to move forward
 8 with a pilot to support the implementation of SourceLink
 9 both as a resource navigation and small business
 10 ecosystem building tool as an LED and regionally-led
 11 effort to provide an opportunity to really create that
 12 pathway to give business owners the best opportunity to
 13 access the right resource at the right time.

14 And then, finally, our group is continuing
 15 to and working to identifying new ways to connect our
 16 woman, minority and veteran-owned small business owners
 17 to the small business resources that are accessible
 18 through LED and our partners and strive to expand those
 19 efforts as we move into 2021 with both the Alliance for
 20 Economic Inclusion as well as the focused efforts of our
 21 team.

22 So, Mandi, I ran through those pretty
 23 quickly. I just wanted to give an update of what was on
 24 the horizon with small business services as well as what
 25 we had going programatically through COVID 19.

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1 MS. MITCHELL: Thank you, Stephanie, and you
 2 are really good at fast talking.

3 I will tell you that that was probably, I'd
 4 say, 10 percent of all that small business has going on
 5 right now. Just so you-all know that our Small Business
 6 Services Team is a really hardworking group, and I --
 7 they're just nonstop with, you know, existing
 8 programming and with new programming that we're bringing
 9 on onboard.

10 So thank you for that report, Stephanie,
 11 and, as she promised, we will get out to all of our
 12 members a written summary update on everything that's
 13 happening with our Small Business Services Team.

14 So at this time, we'll move to any other
 15 business that needs to come before the LSBEC. Any other
 16 business or announcements from any of our other
 17 partners?

18 (No response.)

19 MS. MITCHELL: Okay. Hearing none, I don't
 20 see a hand going up. Okay. Good deal.

21 Public comments, and I have just received an
 22 update from Ms. Sonja Christophe, she has not received
 23 any public comments or questions regarding our
 24 proceedings today, so we have had no public comment.

25 And before we adjourn, members, I would like

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1 to just put you-all on notice, we're going to try to
 2 meet again if possible early April, potentially late
 3 March just so that we don't butt up against all of the
 4 activity that kicks up leading into legislative session,
 5 but we know it's going to be a time that we can bring in
 6 a speaker of interest, someone over at the legislature
 7 who can share with us what's to come during the session
 8 that may have an impact on small businesses.

9 So at this time, Mr. Chairman, anything else
 10 we'd like to add on the table?

11 SECRETARY PIERSON: No. I think fantastic
 12 job by all, and appreciate the dedicated attention and
 13 passion of all the council members here today. Look
 14 forward to continuing to make great progress for our
 15 small businesses array across Louisiana.

16 MS. MITCHELL: Thank you, Secretary Pierson.
 17 And, Mr. E.J. Krampe, any closing remarks?

18 MR. KRAMPE: Mandi, thank you, and Secretary
 19 Pierson, thank you and your teams for a really good
 20 meeting. I think our initiatives for this year are spot
 21 on, and I think the conversation we had today was really
 22 important moving forward with COVID and just in
 23 business, the business climate in general. So thank
 24 y'all for your participation.

25 MS. MITCHELL: Thank you.

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1 All right. And thank you to all of our
 2 guests today, especially Representative Carter, thank
 3 you for hanging in here. I know this is of interest to
 4 you to hear from these business owners that we're so
 5 privileged that give to us their time and their brain
 6 power and their real-world experiences so that we are
 7 making recommendations that are meaningful that won't go
 8 sit on a shelf somewhere, and we know that you will see
 9 to it if there are any recommendations that require any
 10 legislation, so thank you for joining us.

11 And with that, everybody, thank you for your
 12 time. We appreciate your time today, as always, and
 13 look out for some followup e-mails from myself and
 14 Stephanie Hartmann and possibly Sonja Christophe.

15 Motion to adjourn from someone?

16 MR. GREENWOOD: So moved.

17 MS. DAVIS: Second.

18 MS. MITCHELL: I was going to say, I can
 19 stay with y'all.

20 I heard a motion to adjourn.

21 MR. GREENWOOD: Second.

22 MS. MITCHELL: All right. Motion and second
 23 to adjournment, and we are adjourned. Thank you,
 24 everybody, for your time today. Appreciate you.

25 (Meeting concludes at 12:17 p.m.)



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