

**GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL
EDUCATION**

**LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Videoconference Host:

Governor's Council
550 W. 7th Avenue, Suite 1220
Anchorage, Alaska

Meeting Date

April 3, 2024
1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Attendees:

Caitlin Poindexter, Chair
Art Delaune
Corey Gilmore
Shelly Vendetti-Vuckovich
Margaret Evans
Carl (CB) Brady

Guests:

Sabrina Richmond
Michael Christian
Dave Fleurant
Nona Safra
Kayla McDonogh

Staff:

Patrick Reinhart
Jamie Kokoszka

CALL TO ORDER – 1:35 p.m.
ROLL CALL – Quorum established

WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR

Introductions, Announcements, or Good News

Caitlin Poindexter welcomed attendees to the meeting.

Patrick Reinhart introduced new Council member Kayla McDonogh. Kayla shared that she holds the special education teacher seat.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS

No conflicts of interest were declared.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA and MINUTES

Corey Gilmore **MOVED** to approve the April 3, 2024 meeting agenda as presented, **SECONDED** by Shelly Vendetti-Vuckovich. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**.

CB Brady **MOVED** to approve the March 5, 2024 meeting minutes as presented, **SECONDED** by Art Delaune. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**.

REPORTS

Chair Report

Caitlin Poindexter reported attending the Stone Soup Group Parent Conference. She found valuable information for parents of children with special needs. She noted that one of the speakers, Hasan Davis, author of *The Race*, was excellent.

Caitlin Poindexter shared that she regularly meets with Patrick Reinhart and Jamie Kokoszka between Legislative Committee meetings to keep abreast of legislative activity.

Caitlin Poindexter reported that she, Jena Crafton, and Rich Saville plan to attend the Disability Policy Seminar in Washington, D.C. next week. They will be joined by Links Mat-Su Parent Resource Center representatives and LEND faculty and fellows.

GCDSE Staff Report

Governor's Council staff shared the following information:

- The Council's planner position is still vacant. Candidate interviews will begin next week.
- Many Council staff will be in the field or on personal leave for the next few weeks. Jamie Kokoszka will be the contact person in the interim.

- The Full Lives Conference is scheduled for Thursday and Friday, April 11 – 12, 2024. Lanny Mommsen will be presenting at Full Lives on emergency preparedness.
- Jamie Kokoszka and Samantha Vetter attended the Mat-Su Employer Expo at the Menard Sports Center. Jamie noted it was well attended, and many individuals with disabilities and service providers visited the Council's table.
- Director Duane Mayes is retiring at the end of April. Gina Bastian was chosen as the acting DVR director.
- The Mental Health Trust Authority Comp Plan will be available for public input through April 30, 2024.
- The next Council meeting is scheduled for May 30 – 31, 2024. The fall meeting is tentatively scheduled for September 19 – 20, 2024 in Anchorage.
- The Mental Health Trust Authority's Improving Lives Conference is scheduled for September 17 – 18, 2024 at the Dena'ina Convention Center in Anchorage.

BUSINESS

AKLeg.gov

Caitlin Poindexter reminded the committee that AKLeg.gov is a valuable resource for tracking legislative activity during the session. She noted that a fact sheet with links to the legislative process in Alaska was attached to the meeting agenda.

2024 State Legislative Updates and Discussion

Joint Advocacy:

- HB 360, Home Care Employment Standards Advisory Board
 - Update: No hearing scheduled
- SB 250, Uniform Act: Guardianship/Conservatorship
 - Update: Referred to Health & Social Services/Judiciary
- HB 355, Statewide Public and Community Transit Plan
 - Update: Referred to Transportation
- HB 161 / SB 104, Civil Legal Services Fund
 - Update: No update
- HB 219, Repeal Assistive Technology Loan Program
 - Update: Informational hearing in House Finance

Council tracking:

- HB 111 / SB 143, Education for Deaf and Hearing Impaired
 - Update: It was lumped into the education omnibus bill, which didn't pass, and was disassembled

- HB 167, Minors in Facilities Outside Alaska
 - Update: No update
- SB 91, Telehealth: Multidisciplinary Care Team
 - Update: A hearing scheduled in HHS on April 4, 2024, at 3:00 p.m. with invited public testimony
- SB 241 / HB 344, Medical Assisted Demonstration Projects
 - Update: Referred to House Rules
- HB 343 / SB 240, School District Medical Assistance
 - Update: Referred to House Rules
 - Note: Patrick Reinhart and Shelly Vendetti-Vuckovich signed a letter of support on March 11, 2024

Other activity:

- Centralized Accommodation Fund (CAF)
 - Update: The Council withdrew its position paper on CAF due to the administrative solution of creating a fund to pay for accommodations for employees and potential employees with disabilities. There was discussion on the CAF in the House Finance Committee meeting, and they withdrew the \$100,000 request amendment. DVR Director Mayes plans to follow up on the CAF this month.
- Environmental Modifications (E-Mod)
 - Update: Rep. Vance shared the concern of not having enough money in the system for E-Mods and changing the maximum threshold with DOH Commissioner Hedberg. The House Finance Committee passed an amendment to its budget proposal that directed the department to change the cap to \$40,000 and the 90-day service calendar to 270 days.
- Participant-Directed Services
 - Update: The Trust approved a contract of \$50,000, and the Council added \$5,000 to it to expedite a plan and package of regulation recommendations for the Department to implement participant-directed services. Alaska is the only state that does not offer participant-directed services. Other agencies contributed financially to the effort as well.
- Budget Bills
 - Update: The Governor submits an operating budget bill. The House takes the lead on the operating budget, and the Senate takes the lead on the capital budget. The House came up with several versions of the operating budget and had time to amend its proposed operating budget. There were 96 amendments proposed by various members of the committee. The vast majority did not pass. Restoring funding to the Alaska Autism Resource Center at SESA (\$50,000) and the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (\$50,000) passed, along

with a series of amendments the Trust requested, including an increase in rates for autism-related behavioral health services, primarily ABA services (\$446,000) and the intent language for home modifications. The House will finalize its budget and send it to the Senate, which is also working on a version of the operating budget. Once they get it, they compare the proposed budgets and develop a Conference Committee to negotiate the final proposal.

- The Council supports three items in the capital budget:
 - \$1M for capital transit funding
 - \$2.6M for special needs housing grant
 - \$560,000 home modification funding

Patrick Reinhart noted that the legislature ends on May 17, 2024.

UPDATE ON FEDERAL ISSUES AND DISCUSSION:

NACDD Federal Updates

Patrick Reinhart reported that the Council is sending members to the Disability Policy Seminar, and they will meet with the Alaska delegation in Washington, D.C. The Alaska cohort will focus on the Autism Cares Act, special education, community living, and Social Security during the visits with Senators Murkowski and Sullivan and Representative Peltola. Patrick noted that the Council will have another opportunity this summer at the NACDD Conference to address federal issues.

Patrick Reinhart reminded members that the Trust continues to host legislative-focused meetings every Friday at 12:15 during the session, and Council members are welcome to attend.

Corey Gilmore reported that in a review of the Shared Vision while working on participant-directed services, it was noted that there is language in the Vision regarding the wording that the Shared Vision does not create a right. He recommended revisiting the Shared Vision and addressing the language. Michael Christian offered Corey time on the SILC meeting agenda at the April 23 – 24, 2024 meeting to discuss that with SILC members.

DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next Legislative Committee meeting is scheduled for May 8, 2024, 1:30 – 3:00 p.m.

GOOD OF THE ORDER AND ADJOURNMENT

Shelly Vendetti-Vuckovich **MOVED** to adjourn, **SECONDED** by Sabrina Richmond/CB Brady. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**, and the meeting adjourned at 2:55 p.m.