

**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

November 7, 2024
12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Committee Members:

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

Council Members and Guests:

Nona Safra
Marlene Wenger
Christine Bohan
Judy Edwards
Jackie St. Clair
Michael Christian

GCDSE Staff:

Jamie Kokoszka
Patrick Reinhart
Chelsea Burke
Rich Saville

Prepared by: Sheila Garrant, Peninsula Reporting

CALL TO ORDER – 12:34 p.m.
ROLL CALL – Quorum established

WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR

Caitlin Poindexter welcomed members and guests to the meeting.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS

No conflicts of interest were declared.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA and MINUTES

Lisa McDonald **MOVED** to approve the meeting agenda as presented, **SECONDED** by CB Brady. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**.

CB Brady **MOVED** to approve the October 10, 2024 meeting minutes as presented, **SECONDED** by Lisa McDonald. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**.

REPORTS

Chair Report

Caitlin Poindexter noted that since the last Legislative Committee meeting, they met with Representative Donna Mears. Rep. Mears has a master's in urban planning, and at the February 2024 meeting with her, the Council brought forward public and community transit issues affecting people with disabilities. Rep. Mears indicated that the timing was not right because of the potential turnover in the legislature after the election. She recommended inviting policymakers to ride public transit next summer with a person with disabilities to experience what they experience navigating public transit. Caitlin noted that the Council will continue highlighting transportation issues for people with disabilities using public transit.

GCDSE Staff Report

Jamie Kokoszka shared that the Reducing Recidivism and Reentry Conference is scheduled for November 18 – 19, 2024 at the Anchorage Sheraton Hotel. Registration is full, and a waitlist has been compiled. She noted that the conference is not available online.

Rich Saville reported that registration is open for the Alaska Statewide Special Education Conference (ASSEC). The Council will be presenting the Inclusive Practice Awards at the ASSEC Conference, and nomination forms are available on the Council's website.

Chelsea Burke reported that the CISS Committee plans to explore the issue of adult changing tables in public restrooms. If there is an avenue for advocacy, the CISS

Committee will bring it to the Legislative Committee. Community member Judy Edwards, who brought the issue forward, provided Council staff with resources and agreed to be a guest at the next CISS Committee meeting.

Patrick Reinhart asked Council members to report to staff whether they plan to attend the February Council meeting in Juneau. He noted that Council members who cannot attend may have another opportunity for advocacy through the Key Campaign, which meets in Juneau about a month after the Council. Patrick added that Key Coalition's lobbyist, David Parish, informed the Council of Key's plan for advocacy and the factors at play. He noted that the Senate will likely organize similarly to last year, and the House appears to likely organize more centrally with a coalition of legislators from both sides of the aisle.

Patrick Reinhart shared that the Alaska Mobility Coalition is hosting its annual teleconference meeting on November 12, 2024 from 4:00 – 5:00 p.m. Council members interested in attending can contact the Council for an invite.

BUSINESS

What Makes the Legislative Committee Agenda

Caitlin Poindexter reported that she met with Council staff to define what makes up the Legislative Committee agenda. She noted that if the Council's other committees have a concern they want legislative action on, they are being asked to explore and research the issues and develop a direct ask before bringing it to the Legislative Committee.

Caitlin Poindexter reminded the committee that the Council will hold a "Meet Your Legislator" training at the Legislative Committee meeting in January. In February, Council members will meet to review position papers.

AKleg.gov Questions/Updates from Representative Wright

Caitlin Poindexter reminded the committee that AKLeg.gov is a valuable resource for tracking legislative activity during the session. She noted that the bios of policymakers are quite interesting, and the information may be helpful when advocating.

Voting Accessibility – Commentary

Caitlin Poindexter opened the floor for comments about voting accessibility in the latest election.

CB Brady remarked that it was his first time using the accessible tablets for voting and found it interesting. He said it was a little rocky, but the opportunity was available, and the more they are out there, the more people will ask for them, and the better it will get. He said that the experiences of people he spoke with were similar. CB noted that the process took about 20 minutes longer than had it not been the tablet.

Art Delaune commented that he specifically talked to the poll workers running the accessible voting machine and found that nobody had used it that day, and it was reported that in the last three years, nobody has asked to use the accessible voting machine.

Lisa McDonald noted that she works as an election field worker on the Kenai Peninsula. She travels to various sites, and her primary job is to check the accessibility of the polls. She noted that reasonable effort was made to clear the polls of snow and ice. At the Soldotna poll, there was an attendant at the accessible voting machine who was willing to assist people individually on how to use the machine. Lisa reported that approximately 87 people had used the accessible machine that day. The only complaint she heard was a long walk from the handicapped parking to the room where the polling site was located in Nikiski. That was resolved by having an attendant advise people who couldn't walk to the room from the entrance that they could access the building from the back entrance, which was closer to the polling room. Lisa said a suggestion was made to use mobility carts for individuals at some facilities where the poll room was a distance from the entrance.

Training for Presenting the Council's Position Papers

Caitlin Poindexter reported that the Legislative Committee will conduct legislative visit training on Thursday, January 9th, 2024. The position papers will be prioritized, and the committee will allow time for Council members to absorb the content. On Thursday, February 6th, a week before the Council meets in Juneau, the Legislative Committee will invite Council members to a "meet with legislators" training. Caitlin noted that an abbreviated legislative training will be scheduled at the Council meeting in Juneau.

2024 STATE LEGISLATIVE UPDATES AND DISCUSSION

SESA Funding Presentation

Caitlin Poindexter reported that there were no changes to the SESA funding request.

ILP Program Funding

Rich Saville reported that a group of ICC members met with Senator Giessel's chief of staff Jane Conway a few weeks ago and talked with them about the ILP Program funding request and the work of the ICC. Ms. Conway suggested a better approach would be to ask for the entire funding up front rather than the "make whole" portion this year and the expansion funding next year. In light of the recommendation, the ICC has shifted its strategy. The group is working on putting together a dollar figure on the recommendations from the report and requesting that, with an understanding that reasonably they may not be successful in an approval for the entire amount but maybe a portion, and work can continue for the remainder at another time. Patrick Reinhart commented that the guidance is good, and he is glad to hear the committee will heed the advice. As far as the Council's position paper, it will continue to support the request.

DD Shared Vision

Chelsea Burke reported that the DD Shared Vision 2.0 work is being broken down into three subcommittees focused on the priorities. The subcommittees have begun to meet and organize. Chelsea reminded the committee that the Council had a position paper last session related to self-directed care, which is at the heart of the DD Shared Vision. Art Delaune suggested that staff look at the questions asked by legislators about the DD Shared Vision during the last session to be prepared to answer them.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Child Bill of Rights

Rich Saville reported that the group that drafted the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Child Bill of Rights is starting again with a new bill, and it may not be ready to present this session. Patrick Reinhart reported that a national expert was brought in to review the bill, and the consensus was that it was a good thing the bill did not pass the last session because it was not a well-written description of a deaf and hard of hearing bill of rights. He noted that starting over and getting it right so that it doesn't cause the deaf community to be divided on the language is the right thing to do.

Public and Community Transit

Patrick Reinhart reported that the bill introduced last year by Representative Mina was the exact language that the Alaska Mobility Coalition, the Council, and SILC supported. There will be no change to the bill. The ask is that the State Department of Transportation and Public Facilities incorporate public and community transit in its planning and reporting requirements to the legislature.

Patrick Reinhart reported that during the last session, the legislature added \$2M in community match funding to the Denali Commission's funding for public and community transit capital projects. The Council met with the Denali Commission and talked to them about how entities may be able to apply for funding through the commission for capital transit projects.

Medicaid Buy-In

Caitlin Poindexter reported that the Medicaid buy-in topic will be explored by the Employment Committee.

Other

Patrick Reinhart reported that no update is available for the adult changing table issue brought forward at the last meeting. Chelsea Burke noted that she will review the resources given to her by Judy Edwards, who will be a guest speaker at the next CISS Committee meeting.

UPDATE ON FEDERAL ISSUES AND DISCUSSION

Patrick Reinhart reported that with the upcoming changes in administration at the federal level, priorities may change, and until the government organizes and signals direction, many disability-related priorities will be put on hold. Patrick noted that advocacy organizations will continue to keep abreast of changes and potential legislation affecting the disability population.

DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Caitlin Poindexter noted the dates and times of the Legislative Committee meetings as follows:

- December 12, 2024, 12:30 – 2:00 p.m.
- January 9, 2025, 12:30 – 2:00 p.m.
- February 6th, 2025, 12:00 – 2:00 p.m., training on presenting the Council's position papers.

Caitlin Poindexter noted that additional meetings may be added in preparation for legislative visits.

JUNEAU COUNCIL MEETING AND LEGISLATIVE VISITS

Caitlin Poindexter noted that legislative visits will be scheduled during the Juneau Council meeting planned for February 10 – 13, 2025. Council members were asked to contact the Council with their travel needs.

GOOD OF THE ORDER AND ADJOURNMENT

Shelly Vendetti-Vuckovich **MOVED** to adjourn, **SECONDED** by Lisa McDonald. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**, and the meeting adjourned at 1:32 p.m.