

**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

December 12, 2024
12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Committee Members:

Caitlin Poindexter, Chair
Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus
Corey Gilmore
Jena Crafton
Margaret Evans
Carl (CB) Brady
Garrett Dominick
Lisa McDonald

Council Members and Guests:

Nona Safra
Marlene Wenger
Christine Bohan
Sabrina Richmond
Elizabeth Joseph

GCDSE Staff:

Jamie Kokoszka
Patrick Reinhart
Chelsea Burke
Rich Saville
Lanny Mommsen

Prepared by: Sheila Garrant, Peninsula Reporting

CALL TO ORDER – 12:31 p.m.
ROLL CALL – Quorum established

WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR

Caitlin Poindexter welcomed members and guests to the meeting and encouraged participation in the discussions.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS

No conflicts of interest were declared.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA and MINUTES

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

Lisa McDonald **MOVED** to approve the November 7, 2024 meeting minutes as presented, **SECONDED** by CB Brady. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**.

REPORTS

Chair Report

Caitlin Poindexter reported attending the Reducing Recidivism Conference on November 17 – 18, 2024. She said the presentation from Dr. Adam Grove related to brain injury was eye-opening for her. Dr. Grove spoke about the prevalence of individuals with TBI in the incarcerated population. Lisa McDonald also attended and as a former corrections officer was impressed by what the state is doing for individuals to assist them with services, shelter, and employment before being released. Jamie Kokoszka added that many topics at the conference coincided with Section 5121, Medicaid Opportunities to Support Youth Transitioning from Incarceration.

GCDSE Staff Report

Patrick Reinhart reported that Council members should have received information about the Juneau Council meeting in February. Council members who cannot attend will be offered an opportunity to attend Key Campaign in March. Patrick shared that the Council's primary legislative advocacy will be the expansion of the Infant Learning Program (ILP).

Patrick Reinhart reported that the Council would like to invite its members to the Inclusive Practice Awards breakfast on day two of the ASSEC Conference.

Patrick Reinhart reported that the Governor's budget comes out this week, and the Council will pay close attention to it.

Patrick Reinhart reported that the staff is busy with the year-end reporting. He noted that he and Jena Crafton will begin drafting the agenda for the Council meeting in Juneau. Patrick said the Council requested a social function at the Governor's house hosted by the Governor or Lieutenant Governor. The Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) also meets in Juneau at the same time as the Governor's Council. The Council has invited the ACoA to participate in the social function at the Governor's house if it happens. The Council will also request to present information on the ILP expansion and other issues before various legislative committees.

Chelsea Burke reported that the Council will conduct its first community forum for the five-year planning cycle at the Juneau Council meeting in February. She explained that the first step is to get statewide community data, and staff will begin that process in the new year.

Patrick Reinhart shared that Chelsea Burke will participate in the Special Olympics Polar Plunge at Goose Lake this weekend. He also shared that former Council member and executive director of Peer Power Ric Nelson published a book titled *Unstoppable: The Ric Nelson Story, Life Lessons in Thriving with Disabilities and Empowering Others*. It is available on Amazon.

Patrick Reinhart attended the last AADD meeting and reported that SDS has post-COVID funds set aside to be used for environmental modifications. This is a new opportunity for people to apply for funding for home modifications.

BUSINESS

What Makes the Legislative Committee Agenda

Caitlin Poindexter reported that the Legislative Committee has been working hard to keep the committee updated on advocacy from the last session and new issues being brought forward this session. Caitlin noted that she is open to feedback.

AKleg.gov Questions/Updates from Representative Wright

Tabled

Training for Presenting the Council's Position Papers

Tabled

2024 Legislative Leadership Scenarios

Patrick Reinhart reported that in recent weeks, the Senate and the House released a draft list of their leadership. Patrick shared the following preliminary information related to the organization of the legislature this session:

- Senator Wilson, former chair of the HSS Committee, was not reelected and was replaced by Senator Dunbar from Anchorage.
- The Education Committee chair is Senator Tobin.
- The breakdown of the House Finance Committee is unknown.
- Aside from Senator Wilson, the Senate Finance Committee will likely be the same as last session.
- The Senate has formed a coalition of Republicans and Democrats.
- The House has formed a coalition of a majority of Democrats with a couple of Republicans and Independents caucusing with them.
- The chair of the House will be Representative Edgmon.
- The chairs of the Senate Finance Committee will be Senators Hoffman, Olson, and Stedman.
- Representative Josephson will be in charge of the House's operating budget.

Patrick Reinhart stated that the leadership will not be formalized until the session starts.

Patrick Reinhart reported that the Children's Caucus was reignited in February 2024. The Children's Caucus focuses on policy to improve early childhood outcomes. The chairs of the Children's Caucus are Senators Tobin and Giesel and House Representatives Cronk and Dibert. Patrick noted that Senator Tobin has sent requests for information on the ILP expansion, and Patrick believes interests are aligned with the Council's efforts to advocate for the expansion.

Patrick Reinhart took a moment to explain the process regarding legislative majorities and minorities. He noted that anyone can bring forth proposed legislation or amendments, but proposed bills are more difficult to pass without the support of the majority leadership.

2024 State Legislative Priorities Discussion

SESA Funding

Rich Saville reported that they are developing the white paper related to the SESA funding request and expect it to be finalized before the legislative training session.

ILP Funding

Rich Saville reported that there has been interest in the ILP expansion from the Children's Caucus. The Interagency Coordinating Council for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities (ICC) sent information to Senator Tobin and staff about the budget request and some basic background information. The ILP will move forward with the entire request, which includes "make whole" funding and expansion costs. Rich noted that the ICC is working behind the scenes to develop talking points and garner support. The proposal is backed by partner agencies, advocates, and other groups focused on children's well-being. Rich shared that the budget request is going to be roughly \$6.4M.

Public and Community Transit

Sabrina Richmond attended the Virtual Peer Exchange on Bike and Pedestrian Infrastructure in Rural Areas on December 3, 2024. She noted it was a good conference but felt they could pay more attention to wheelchair infrastructure.

Patrick Reinhart reminded the members that during the last session, the community and public transit position paper came to the Council from friends at the Alaska Mobility Coalition, and the Council, the Statewide Independent Living Council, and other partners adopted the position paper. The summary was putting public and community transit in statute so the State Department of Transportation would be responsible for developing a statewide public and community transit plan in cooperation with public and community transit operations, local governments, communities, and tribal entities and report back to the legislature. The bill (HB 355) had a hearing last year before the end of the session.

Patrick Reinhart reported that the legislature authorized \$2M of funding to the Denali Commission to support public and community transit matches. He encouraged disability providers to contact the Denali Commission to find out about grant opportunities related to transit.

Jamie Kokoszka commented that a cultural change is needed to address alternate transit needs. Corey Gilmore noted that public transit is challenging to navigate in Anchorage for various reasons.

Adult Changing Tables

Chelsea Burke reported that community member Judy Edwards came to the Council for help with advocating for adult changing tables. She informed the Council that she had started an Alaska chapter of the Changing Space Campaign, a movement advocating for accessible restrooms and universal changing tables nationwide. The Council reached out to other states to see if they had legislation or draft legislation that could be used by the Council as a starting point and could be fashioned into an Alaskan version. Chelsea said that one of the options was draft legislation out of Maryland that proposed requiring changing facilities in public buildings or areas owned or leased by the state or local government; adult changing tables must be built in new construction or if a building is being renovated in any way. She said the CISS Committee will consider the options at the next meeting. Chelsea shared the link to the Changing Spaces Campaign.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Child Bill of Rights

Rich Saville reported that according to DEED, the Deaf Education Board is not the appropriate entity to develop the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Child Bill of Rights because it is a conflict. The Deaf Education Board is working on transitioning the work to the Alaska Deaf Council. The Alaska Deaf Council meets as needed, and Rich will work on the transition effort. Patrick Reinhart reported that Representative Allard's staff

contacted the Council last week about submitting a bill, and he advised them that the bill was being reworked and will come from the Alaska Deaf Council.

Other

Chelsea Burke reported that the Council is forming a housing workgroup focused on creating a PSA for housing in Alaska. If interested, e-mail Chelsea at the Council.

UPDATE ON FEDERAL ISSUES AND DISCUSSION

Patrick Reinhart reported that the Council is receiving a lot of information about potential Medicaid changes. He said there is talk about minor tweaks to the ABLE Act related to assets in probate and issues related to 14(c) certificates and ending subminimum wage for people with disabilities, which Alaska did years ago. Patrick noted that the Department of Labor has proposed regulations to phase out the 14(c) certificate program. Public comment on the proposed rules is being taken until mid-January.

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.

DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

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

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

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 (February 10, travel day).

GOOD OF THE ORDER AND ADJOURNMENT

Jamie Kokoszka directed the members' attention to the information at the end of the agenda. She noted links and information on AKleg.com and the bill tracker. She also shared that the Trust Joint Advocacy group will begin in January on Fridays at 12:15 p.m.

Jamie Kokoszka noted that Council members can contact her with any questions related to the legislative process.

Lisa McDonald **MOVED** to adjourn, **SECONDED** by Sabina Richmond. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**, and the meeting adjourned at 1:54 p.m.