

**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

January 9, 2025
12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Committee Members:

Caitlin Poindexter, Chair
Corey Gilmore
Shelly Vendetti-Vuckovich
Jena Crafton
Margaret Evans
Carl (CB) Brady
Garrett Dominick
Lisa McDonald

Council Members and Guests:

Marlene Wenger
Christine Bohan
Sabrina Richmond
Bradly R.
Judy Edwards
Sandra McMahan
Daphne Milfort
Nick McNeely
Michael Christian

GCDSE Staff:

Jamie Kokoszka
Patrick Reinhart
Chelsea Burke
Rich Saville
Lanny Mommsen

Prepared by: Sheila Garrant, Peninsula Reporting

CALL TO ORDER – 12:02 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

Jena Crafton **MOVED** to approve the meeting agenda as presented, **SECONDED** by Margaret Evans. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**.

Jena Crafton **MOVED** to approve the December 12, 2024 meeting minutes as presented, **SECONDED** by Lisa McDonald. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**.

REPORTS

Chair Report

Caitlin Poindexter had no updates for the committee.

GCDSE Staff Report

Patrick Reinhart reminded Council members who have not made travel arrangements for the Juneau Council meeting to contact the Council office to finalize travel plans. He reported that Monday, February 10th is a travel day for Council members. Also, on February 10th at 4:00 p.m., the Council will be hosting a State Plan Community Forum for the community of Juneau.

Patrick Reinhart reported that he will be on vacation beginning Thursday, January 16, 2025. Chelsea Burke will be acting director.

Jamie Kokoszka reported that the Council staff, as part of a joint effort to increase accessibility for the legislative hearings and the AKleg.gov website, worked with the Legislative Office ADA team and were successful in getting closed captioning Vimeo for all legislative hearings.

Jamie Kokoszka reported that the Trust Joint Advocacy meetings will resume in mid-January. She shared a link to the Trust website for more information about the Joint Advocacy meetings. She noted that the Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA), the Governor's Council, the Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (ABADA), and the Alaska Mental Health Board (AMHB) are part of the team that tracks bills that impact

the populations they serve. The Trust Joint Advocacy meetings are scheduled for Fridays from 12:15 to 1:15 p.m.

Rich Saville reported that the Alaska Deaf Council is hosting a town hall focused on the Deaf Children's Bill of Rights on January 9, 2025 at the Anchorage BP Energy Center, 5:45 p.m. – 7:15 p.m. Rich shared the Zoom link to the meeting. Patrick Reinhart shared that the Council will support the town hall by providing interpreters and live captioning for the event.

Patrick Reinhart reported that the legislative session gavels on February 21, 2025. The Council has been contacted by various legislative leaders in the majority of both bodies related to meetings and potential advocacy at the HSS Committee while in Juneau. He shared that the Council's Lunch & Learn will be designed around the ILP Program expansion.

BUSINESS

AKleg.gov or Other Legislative Questions

Caitlin Poindexter reminded the committee that AKLeg.gov is a valuable resource for tracking legislative activity during the session.

2025 State Legislative Priorities – Updates, Discussion, Committee Vote

Patrick Reinhart reported that the following items have been chosen as advocacy issues the Council will address with legislators:

SESA Funding

Rich Saville directed the members' attention to the SESA funding position paper. He noted that the ask is to support an increase in SESA's funding formula. The position paper talks about what SESA is and what it does. The funding increase would be for the Low Incidence Disabilities Program. He described the illustration that showed the correlation between the average daily membership (ADM – how many students are enrolled in public school), which is in decline, versus the LID student caseload for SESA, which reports a steady increase of approximately 16% yearly. SESA's current funding is based on the ADM, so when that decreases, SESA's budget is decreased even though SESA is seeing a 16% increase in LID enrollment each year for the last four years. He explained that the budget is at a breaking point, and SESA won't be able to hire more full-time positions. When the maximum caseload is exceeded, a waitlist will be enacted for students to receive services. The request is to increase the ADM multiplier from \$23.13 to \$26.89. He noted that SESA is authorized in eight-year increments, and the increase should see SESA through that period.

Infant Learning Program (ILP)

Rich Saville directed the members' attention to the ILP expansion position paper infographic. He reported that the position paper will be shared with Council partners and associations that will also be advocating for the expansion of the program. Rich highlighted the following information from the infographic:

- What ILP is and its importance
- Five key reasons to expand eligibility for early intervention:
 - Reduces the need for special education
 - Positive results for children
 - Works with brain development
 - Because of restrictive eligibility, Alaska trails behind other states
 - Substantial savings that can be used for other educational needs.

Rich Saville shared the draft of talking points for review. He noted that once finalized, the talking points will be helpful when advocating for the expansion.

Public and Community Transit

Patrick Reinhart directed the members' attention to the Alaska Mobility Coalition Legislative Priorities 2025 draft position paper. The key points include:

1. Support Human Services Transportation Grant Program, \$1M
2. Transit match funding, \$1M, to ensure that local transit providers can access all the new federal funding for community transportation
3. Put public and community transportation in statute, requiring DOTP&F to report annually on progress.

Adult Changing Tables

Chelsea Burke directed the members' attention to the position paper related to adult changing tables. She gave an overview of the legislation surrounding universal changing spaces and highlighted the following information:

- The proposed legislation for public building and changing facility requirements would add a provision that a changing facility suitable for changing the diaper of a child and for providing personal care for an adult be installed in restrooms in public buildings.
- Changing facilities that provide safe, clean accommodations for all ages, no matter weight or abilities are known as universal changing spaces. Universal tables are height adjustable, hold up to 400 pounds, and measure at least 70" by 30".

Chelsea Burke noted that the legislation would require universal changing spaces in public buildings owned or leased by the state and local government. It would require the universal changing space to be built in a new public building or if a public building is being renovated. Chelsea reported that the legislation does not have a fiscal note, although there will be an administrative burden.

Chelsea Burke shared a list of talking points for review and noted that the talking points will be helpful when advocating for the universal changing spaces.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children's Bill of Rights

Patrick Reinhart directed the members' attention to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children's Bill of Rights position paper. He reported that SB 143/HB 111 are pre-filed bills. The Alaska Deaf Council is taking the lead on the bill.

State Budget Funding Priorities

State Access and Functional Needs Coordinator Budget Request

Lanny Mommsen reported that the Alaska Disability Advisory Group (ADAG) comprises representatives from state and federal agencies and non-profit organizations in Alaska. The ADAG was created to help support emergency planning and response for individuals with disabilities and other vulnerable populations in Alaska. To support those efforts, ADAG recommends adding an Access and Functional Needs (AFN) Coordinator within the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC).

Lanny Mommsen reported that 111,809 adults in Alaska live with a disability. As disasters disproportionately impact the disability community and other vulnerable populations, ADAG believes the SEOC should enhance its ability to reach these Alaska residents by including AFN coordination in every aspect of emergency management. AFN should be ingrained into every service the SEOC delivers to comply with federal laws, including the ADA Act, the Fair Housing Act, and the Rehabilitation Act.

Deaf Navigator Program Funding

Patrick Reinhart reported that the Deaf Navigator Program has existed for many years. The program began at The Arc of Anchorage and is now housed at Hope Community Resources. Patrick noted that at the Deaf Culture Lunch & Learn held last year, they learned that there had not been an increase in that program since it started. The program is looking for approximately \$75,000 to continue the program in Anchorage. Patrick shared that funding for grants available to organizations through SDS has shrunk. SDS can't ask for an increase, so as advocates, the Council wanted to add this to the list of things that need to be addressed. Hopefully this funding can be added to the operations budget at SDS to increase the grant.

Ranking Priorities

Council members were asked to rank the legislative priorities via a chat poll.

Comments

Michael Christian shared that the priorities of the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) include the State Access and Functional Needs Coordinator position at ADAG and public and community transit.

Judy Edwards thanked the Council for its efforts on the universal changing spaces.

Jamie Kokoszka directed the members' attention to the bottom of the agenda, which has information on the legislative process and links to Akleg.gov and other resources to track bills during the session.

REMINDERS

January 2025

Fridays, 12:15 p.m. – 1:15 p.m. – Trust Joint Advocacy Meetings (Zoom)

February 6, 2025

12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. – Meet Your Legislator Training
Practice presenting Council position papers

UPDATE ON FEDERAL ISSUES AND DISCUSSION

Tabled.

DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next Legislative Committee meeting is scheduled for February 6th, 2025 from 12:00 to 2:00 p.m.

GOOD OF THE ORDER AND ADJOURNMENT

Shelly Vendetti-Vuckovich **MOVED** to adjourn, **SECONDED** by Sabrina Richmond. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**, and the meeting adjourned at 1:59 p.m.