

**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

March 6, 2025
12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Committee Members:

Caitlin Poindexter, Chair
Art Delaune
Corey Gilmore
Jena Crafton
Margaret Evans
Carl (CB) Brady
Lisa McDonald

Council Members and Guests:

Marlene Wenger
Christine Bohan
Myrna Johannson
Judy Edwards
Michael Christian
Elizabeth Joseph
Demii Van Dusen
Nona Safra

GCDSE Staff:

Jamie Kokoszka
Patrick Reinhart
Rich Saville

Prepared by: Sheila Garrant, Peninsula Reporting

CALL TO ORDER – 12:30 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

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

Jena Crafton **MOVED** to approve the January 9, 2025 meeting minutes as presented, **SECONDED** by Lisa McDonald. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**.

REPORTS

Committee Chair Update

Caitlin Poindexter has no updates to report.

GCDSE Staff Report

Jamie Kokoszka reminded the committee that the Trust Joint Advocacy Zoom meetings are held every Friday from 12:15 – 1:15 p.m. Individuals can contact the Trust's advocacy coordinator to be added to the mailing list.

Jamie Kokoszka shared a document that provided links to the following resources:

- Alaska State Legislature page - <https://w3.akleg.gov/index.php>
- Public testimony opportunities – <https://akleg.gov/pages/testify.php>
- Legislative Information Office Directory – <https://akleg.gov/lios.php>
- Frequently Asked Questions – <https://akleg.gov/faq.php>
- SMS Bill Tracking tool from BASIS:
 - Link to BASIS e-mail alert sign-up page
 - https://www.akleg.gov/basis/btmf_login.asp?session=32
 - Track bills in BTMF
 - https://www.akleg.gov/basis/btmf_login.asp?session=33

Patrick Reinhart reminded the committee that the next Council meeting is scheduled for May 14 – 15, 2025 at the Atwood Center in Anchorage. Council members are encouraged to contact Ian Miner for travel arrangements.

BUSINESS

Debrief Council Meeting and Legislative visit

Caitlin Poindexter opened the floor for feedback from Council members on how the legislative meetings in Juneau went. A summary of the feedback follows:

- Draft schedule and packets completed on Monday
 - Members would like to have the packet a few days before visits
- Council members matched with their legislators
- GCDSE staff teamed up with Council members
 - Members appreciated when staff attended meetings with teams
- The Jan Faiks Room worked well for accessibility and videoconferencing
- Need to be aware of accessibility issues in and around the Capitol building
- It is a good choice to use a popular lunch site for the Lunch & Learn
- Always want more time with the lawmakers.

Jena Crafton thanked the Council members and staff for an excellent Juneau Council meeting. She enjoyed spending time with the attendees.

GCDSE 504 Letter and Meeting with Senator Begich

Patrick Reinhart shared a letter from the Council to Governor Dunleavy and Attorney General Treg Taylor strongly urging the State of Alaska to withdraw from the Texas v. Becerra lawsuit, outlining that the Council serves as an advice body to the governor and policymakers on issues that impact Alaskans with intellectual and developmental disabilities as well as the other roles of the Governor's Council, and they requested an opportunity to meet with them to discuss further why Texas v. Becerra is harmful to individuals with disabilities.

Patrick Reinhart reported that the Attorney General's Office responded by scheduling a meeting with AG Treg Taylor and Commissioner Hedberg. In the meeting, they explained why they signed on to the lawsuit and listened to the Council's concerns. AG Treg Taylor explained that all states have filed a status report with the court, and there would not be an update on the lawsuit until April 21, 2025.

GCDSE Letter of Support Complex Care Residential Homes

Patrick Reinhart shared a letter of support for House Bill 73 and Senate Bill 76 on Complex Care Residential Homes written by the Council to the members of the Alaska Legislature. He explained that it has been a long-time issue of the state's inability to provide a safe and therapeutic environment for people with significant developmental disabilities and co-occurring mental health issues/behavioral health issues that prevent them from being in a group home. The state has gone forward with legislation from the Governor to create a new type of residential service called complex care residential homes. One of the Council's recommendations in the letter of support was a limit of ten beds versus the 30 beds proposed. The Council also recommended having separate facilities for youth and adults.

2025 State Legislative Priorities Updates

SESA Funding

- Rich Saville reported that Representative Josephson signaled that he would add SESA funding to an amendment to the House version of the budget.

Infant Learning Program

- Rick Saville reported that the House put \$5.72M into its budget for ILP expansion in two steps, initially proposing \$2M for the program and then proposing an amendment for \$3.72M. The line on the amendment form said, "to bring Part C eligibility into alignment with Part B." Advocates are still working on the language of the proposed bill. They met with Senator Tobin's staff and Representative Hall's office to discuss changes. There was a hearing in front of the Alaska Children's Caucus, after which Amy Simpson got phone calls from legislators asking questions about the proposed change to eligibility.

Public and Community Transit

- Patrick Reinhart reported that the Council sent a letter of support for HB 26 and participated in public testimony at a hearing held last week in Community and Regional Affairs where Representative Mina had the opportunity to present HB 26. There was some dialogue between the legislators and the Department of Transportation because DOT maintained they do what the proposed bill asks for. It was explained that it needs to be in statute to avoid changes depending on the administration. As a follow-up, Representative Mina sent a letter to the Council requesting a meeting with the Council and the deputy commissioner of DOT to talk about the bill.

Adult Changing Tables

- Patrick Reinhart reported that after the meeting with legislators, Representative Ruffridge and Senator Bjorkman requested language for a potential bill that was delivered to them, and they took that to Legislative Legal to start drafting a bill. Judy Edwards added that she and her son plan to meet with Rep. Ruffridge and Senator Bjorkman.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Child Bill of Rights

- Rich Saville reported that the Alaska Deaf Council is leading the legislative action. They have a large contingency going to Juneau for meetings with legislators.
- Jamie Kokoszka reported that Representatives Allard, Underwood, Johnson, and Rauscher sponsor HB 39.

State Access and Functional Needs Coordinator

Deaf Navigator Program Funding

- Patrick Reinhart reported he had an opportunity to speak before the Senate Finance Committee during public testimony. He mentioned funding for the functional needs coordinator and deaf navigator and followed up with written testimony to the committee. They will be looking for an opportunity to advocate in the House committees and public testimony.

Other

- Nona Safra reported that she was on a call with Congressman Begich and AARP about family caregivers at the federal level. She spoke on behalf of all family caregivers.

- Nona Safra shared a document titled *SB 99 Sponsor Statement, CPA as Private Professional Conservators*, an Act relating to private professional conservators. She remarked that it is complicated to be a conservator in Alaska.

Update on Federal Issues:

Patrick Reinhart reported that the Council is getting many federal updates and waiting to hear news about what will happen with Medicaid on the federal level. He noted that the information the Council receives is conflicting and confusing but serious.

Time and Date of Next Meeting:

The next Legislative Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 3, 2025 from 12:30 – 2:00 p.m. May's Legislative Committee meeting is scheduled for May 1, 2025, 12:30 – 2:00 p.m.

Good of the Order and Adjournment:

Lisa McDonald **MOVED** to adjourn, **SECONDED** by Corey Gilmore. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**, and the meeting adjourned at 1:50 p.m.