

# LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

## MEETING MINUTES

### Videoconference Host

Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education  
550 W. 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 1220  
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

### Meeting Date

Thursday, January 8, 2026  
3:00 p.m.

### Committee Members Present:

Caitlin Poindexter, Art Delaune, Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus, Corey Gilmore, Shelly Vendetti Vuckovich, Lisa McDonald, Sabrina Richmond, Marlene Wenger

### GCDSE Staff:

Jamie Kokoszka, Patrick Reinhart, Rich Saville, Lanny Mommsen, Chelsea Burke

### Council Members and Guests:

Kaleigh Holm, Scott Lindbloom, Amanda Coelho, Duane Mayes

**Minutes Prepared by:** Sheila Garrant, Peninsula Reporting

CALL TO ORDER – 3:02 p.m.

ROLL CALL – Quorum established

### WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR

Caitlin Poindexter welcomed attendees to the meeting.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION

No conflicts of interest were declared.

### APPROVE PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

Lisa McDonald **MOVED** to approve the November 2025 meeting minutes as presented, **SECONDED** by Sabrina Richmond. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**.

### APPROVE AGENDA

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

### REPORTS

#### Chair Report

Caitlin Poindexter expressed appreciation to Jamie Kokoszka for accommodating the committee members in scheduling future Legislative Committee meetings.

## Staff Report

Council staff reported the following information:

- Council staff Jamie Kokoszka and Ian Miner have been working on scheduling the legislative visits taking place during the Council meeting in February. They expect 14 Council members to attend the Juneau meeting, along with five Council staff.
- *A Meet Your Legislator Training* is scheduled for January 28, 2026, from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. A copy of the training can be sent to Council members who are unable to attend.
- The next Community Inclusion Supports & Services meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 27, 2026 at 11:00 a.m. During the meeting, SDS representatives will present on the interRAI system.
- The Stone Soup Group Parent Conference is scheduled for March 25 – 27, 2026.
- The Full Lives Conference is scheduled for April 16 – 17, 2026.
- The Trust’s Improving Lives Conference is scheduled for September 17 – 18, 2026.
- Council staff member Rich Saville was invited to speak to the Parent Committee of the Alaska Deaf Council on January 17, 2026 about SB 178, the Infant Learning Program expansion bill.
- The Alaska Statewide Special Education Conference is scheduled for February 2 – 4, 2026.

Scott Lindbloom shared that he will be involved in a LEND presentation on March 6, 2026 focused on self-advocacy and will be doing a podcast on how to train a social worker in self-advocacy and advocacy.

## BUSINESS

### 2026 Federal Issues and Discussion

Patrick Reinhart reported that there’s been an update on appropriations. If Congress passes a continuing resolution, DD Act funding will remain stable.

Patrick Reinhart reported that there are significant changes with the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) at the U.S. Department of Education (DOE). The administration intends to eliminate the U.S. DOE, and there is talk of moving OSERS to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services within the Administration on Community Living. Patrick noted that the Council does not support dismantling the U.S. DOE, citing that the lack of federal oversight of states may jeopardize the rights of students with disabilities.

Patrick Reinhart reported that this week Senator Murkowski’s office requested that the Council provide input on four education bills scheduled for “mark-up” by the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committees. The Council has been working with partners to develop input. News later came that the input was no longer urgent because the committee must entertain a controversial amendment and expects the “mark-up” of the four education bills to be delayed.

## 2026 State Issues and Discussion

Patrick Reinhart reported that he attended the Trust Advisory Board meeting. The discussion focused on the budget the Governor presented ahead of the session. The Governor's budget was presented as essentially a status quo budget. The partners expect a revised budget that includes the \$272M award to the state for Rural Transformation funding over the next four years. The Department of Health is currently drafting a plan on how the award will be spent. The Council provided input during the application process. There is an understanding that a request will not be funded if it supplants other funding or is not transformative. The state has scheduled the 2026 Alaska Rural Health Transformation Program meeting for January 14 – 16, 2026. The virtual meeting is on January 14, 2026, and the in-person meetings are on January 15 and 16, 2026. Patrick noted that there is a waitlist for the in-person sessions.

## So Every BODY Can Move Alaska (SEBCM) Update

Patrick Reinhart reported that SEBCM created a fact sheet outlining what the bill does and doesn't do, the fiscal impact as evidenced in other states, and why it matters in Alaska. Patrick noted that the bill improves fairness, mobility, and health outcomes for Alaskans with limb loss and limb difference without materially increasing costs. Independent actuarial studies and insurer rate filings from multiple states confirm the fiscal impact is negligible. Patrick added that they have a bill sponsor, Andy Josephson, the co-chair of the Finance Committee, and a bill number is forthcoming.

Corey Gilmore **MOVED** to add the SEBCM Alaska bill as a Council priority for the upcoming Juneau visit, **SECONDED** by Marlene Wenger. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**.

## Council Priorities

Council staff reported the Council priorities as follows:

- SB 178: Expand Early Intervention Services (Infant Learning Program)
  - It was introduced and passed through the House HSS Committee, then moved to the Senate Finance Committee to discuss the fiscal note, which is the same amount as the budget increase requested last session.
  - On the list of talking points is using the Rural Health Transformation Grant funding to support the expansion.
  - The Council was invited to speak at the Children's Caucus meeting when it meets in Juneau.
- HB 26: Statewide Public and Community Transit
  - Passed the House
  - Efforts continue to revise the position paper.
- HB 141: Public Buildings; Changing Facilities
  - A meeting has been scheduled with Representative Carrick to discuss the position paper.
- HB 39 and SB 8: Education for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
  - The Council has turned the lead advocacy to the Alaska Deaf Council (ADC). The Council will continue to support the bill.
    - Passed the House
    - ADC has met with Representative Allard and discussed that HB 39 was pulled from the House floor with the intent to bring it back.

ADC has requested that the House vote take place during its advocacy visit to Juneau so people can support the bill in person.

- SEBCM Alaska: Bill number forthcoming

Jamie Kokoszka noted that although SESA funding was removed from the priority list, it will be brought up in the SESA Reauthorization discussion in 2028. She added that with regard to the access and functional needs coordinator position, the Council advocated for it last session; however, it was set aside due to the administration's lack of support.

## State Budget Funding Updates

### *interRAI*

Patrick Reinhart reported that one specific issue not included in the Governor's budget, which is concerning, is funding for Senior and Disabilities Services' budget to work on the interRAI project, the new needs assessment to develop an individual's plan of care. SDS is in the middle of the project, and funding has been expended. The funding needed to continue is approximately \$509,000.

### *Guidehouse Rate Study*

Jamie Kokoszka reported that the home and community-based services (HCBS) rate funding increases proposed in the Guidehouse report range from \$19.2M to \$28M. The study focuses on long-term services and supports, including all rates under the HCBS waivers. Patrick Reinhart reported that the rate study shows that the rates for HCBS waivers have not kept pace with inflation and other pressures. The state engaged a contractor to review the landscape and provide recommendations. The three areas studied include long-term services and supports, behavioral health services, and Medicaid transportation. As suspected, the state came up woefully short on rates.

Patrick Reinhart noted that the fiscal note for the rate change could be as high as \$28M to bring the state up to par. In a year with a tight state budget, it would be a challenging advocacy. Patrick added that given these facts, a collapse of the service system is possible if the state does not pay appropriate rates for services, leading to individuals moving to institutions and other negative impacts. He believes it will be a priority for all advocacy agencies and partners to discuss how the state should address the rate study, the shortfalls, and the critically important issues surrounding HCBS.

### *Other*

Jamie Kokoszka reported that the Council submitted a letter of support for SB 190, the Uniform Act Guardianship Conservatorship bill. Amanda Coelho shared that SILC will also submit a letter of support for SB 190.

## TIME AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Legislative Committee meeting has been scheduled for March 12, 2026, 3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Upcoming Legislative Committee meetings have been scheduled for April 9, 2026, 3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.; and May 14, 2026, 3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

The Juneau Council meeting is scheduled for February 9 – 12, 2026

- February 9 – travel; February 10 – Council meeting; February 11 & 12 – half meeting, half legislative visits; February 12 – legislator visits, photo op, and departure.

The Trust’s Joint Advocacy meetings are scheduled on Fridays from 12:30 p.m. to 1:15 p.m., on Zoom from the end of January through the legislative session.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Lisa McDonald **MOVED** to adjourn, **SECONDED** by Marlene Wenger. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**, and the meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

DRAFT