

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

Videoconference Host

Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education
550 W. 7th Ave., Suite 1220
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Meeting Date
April 9, 2026
3:00 p.m.

Committee Members Present: Caitlin Poindexter – Co-Chair, Art Delaune – Co-Chair, Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus, Corey Gilmore, Margaret Evans, Lisa McDonald, Sabrina Richmond, Marlene Wenger

Council Members and Guests: Duane Mayes

GCDSE Staff: Rich Saville, Chelsea Burke

Minutes Prepared by: Sheila Garrant, Peninsula Reporting

CALL TO ORDER – 3:00 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 March 2026 meeting minutes as presented, **SECONDED** by Corey Gilmore. 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
Co-Chair Report
No news to report.

Staff Report

Chelsea Burke reported that the spring Council meeting is scheduled for May 4 – 5, 2026. She reminded members to finalize their travel plans/accommodations with Ian Miner at the Council office.

Chelsea Burke shared that the Council scheduled a Democratic Rules of Order training for Tuesday, April 28, 2026 at 11:00 a.m.

BUSINESS

Representative Andi Story Update

No update was available.

Council Priorities

Staff reported the Council's legislative priorities as follows:

1. *SB 178/HB 376 – Expand Early Intervention Services (ILP Program)*
 - a. SB 178 has not moved since the Senate Finance hearing.
 - b. HB 376 was heard by the House Health & Social Services Committee on April 2, and a second hearing was held on April 7. There were many questions seeking clarification on the finances and supporting data. The public testimony included two providers, one from Fairbanks and one from Sitka, both of whom were in support. The most recent round of questions from the representatives focused on parental involvement, whether DEED could provide an official fiscal note supporting the savings the expansion purports to achieve, and whether SDS could work with other partner agencies and departments to define the range of possible savings from expansion.
 - c. The amendment deadline for the bill in the House Health & Social Services is set for April 13.
 - d. The next hearing for the bill is scheduled for April 14 at 3:15 p.m.
Comment: Caitlin Poindexter suggested contacting Raviant, the contractor involved in the expansion effort, for assistance with data.
2. *HB 246 – SESA Funding*
 - a. The House Finance Committee heard HB 246 on April 8. Olivia Yancey presented at the hearing and was asked many questions, including questions about the waitlist and how SESA interfaces with ILP. Overall, the tone was positive. There was no public comment.
3. *HB 141 – Universal Changing Facilities*
 - a. No movement.
 - b. Progress includes a ribbon-cutting ceremony during Key Campaign for a universal changing table in the Capitol building. Judy and Eric Edwards were present for the ceremony.
 - c. A proposal was submitted and accepted by the Trust for a Universal Changing Space Grant Program in FY '27. The Council will issue an RFP to manage the Trust's grant funds.
4. *Waitlist Priorities (interRAI funding and HCBS Guidehouse)*

- a. There has been some movement around interRAI and Guidehouse recommendations since Key Campaign. The House Finance budget includes \$11M in an amendment to begin implementing the Guidehouse rate recommendations, including personal care services and a general rate increase. The budget is still moving, and continued advocacy and public testimony will be vital in the coming weeks.
- b. At the AADD monthly meeting, Director Newman reported that SDS has found additional funding in its budget to keep the interRAI work moving forward.

Comment: Corey Gilmore reported that future CISS Committee meetings will focus on the future and what the interRAI will provide to people with disabilities.

5. *HB 26 – Public and Community Transit*

- a. HB 26 has advanced to the Senate Rules Committee. No hearing has been scheduled.
- b. A new cross-sponsor was recently added.
- c. HB 26 is an aspirational bill that sets a direction for the transit department, not a fiscal bill.

6. *SB 8/HB 39 – Education for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing*

- a. Passed the House and sent to the Senate. It is awaiting scheduling.

7. *HB 272 – Insurance for Prosthetics & Orthotics*

- a. Passed through House Health & Social Services and is currently in the House Finance Committee.

2026 Other Bills of Interest - State Issues and Discussion

- *HB 292 – Insurance: Pediatric Neuropsych Disorders*
 - The Council wrote a letter of support. This bill is specific to Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorders Associated with Streptococcal (PANDAS) infections, a rare condition in children triggered by strep infections leading to sudden onset of OCD, tics, and behavioral changes.
 - HB 292 is scheduled for House Labor & Commerce.
- *HJR 45 – Support Special Education Funding*
 - Urging the United States Congress to fully fund the IDEA. Aligns with federal advocacy priority.
- *SB 190 – Uniform Act: Guardianship/Conservatorship*
 - No update.
- *HB 48 – Civil Legal Services Fund*
 - No update.

2026 Federal Issues and Discussion

- The President’s proposed FY ‘27 budget is similar to last year, again suggesting the elimination of UCEDDs and moving ACL under a different federal agency,

making DD programs less visible by combining funding lines. It keeps DD councils and protection & advocacy programs level-funded.

- A “Dear Colleague” letter is circulating seeking sponsors to support full funding for the DD networks. The Governor’s Council has forwarded requests for support to the Alaska delegation.
- Senator Murkowski introduced a bill to exempt Alaska from J-1 visa fees, because it would drastically reduce the number of people brought to rural Alaska to work in schools, especially in special education. No other information is available.

Five-Year Plan Activity Review

Chelsea Burke directed the members’ attention to the Legislative Committee’s activities in the Five-Year State Plan, noting the need to review the language in the activity description. She posed the following questions with regard to the activities:

- Does it move toward the overall goal?
- Is it a system change?
- If something had to be cut, would this stay?

Activity 2.1 Shared Vision Systems Coordination

- Facilitate cross-system coordination among legislators, agencies, advocates, and self-advocates to elevate lived experience in policy discussions and support implementation of Alaska’s Shared Vision, including participation in and coordination with the Shared Vision Collaborative and discussions impacting Medicaid HCBS waiver services and long-term supports and services.
 - Comments:
 - Swap self-advocates to be first in the list
 - Work on defining “flexible system” for enforcement
 - Moves toward the goal, system change, do not cut.

Activity 2.2 Systems Transparency, Navigation, and Rural Access

- Promote system-level improvements that increase access to plain language and accessible information across agencies, including the development and dissemination of plain language policy resources, and ensure rural and underserved communities are included in system coordination efforts related to service navigation, policy development, and long-term supports and services.
 - Comments:
 - Include braille and larger print
 - Moves toward the goal, system change, do not cut.

Activity 2.3 Workforce & Capacity Systems Advocacy

- Coordinate with partners to elevate workforce and provider capacity challenges affecting the disability services workforce within Medicaid HCBS waiver services and long-term supports and services as a systems issue rather than a single-agency problem, and support cross-system discussions that identify policy and systems improvements aligned with Alaska’s Shared Vision.
 - Comments:
 - Update the language to ensure it is clear that this refers to the staff workforce by adding examples such as DSP or PCA.

- Moves toward the goal, system change, do not cut.

Activity 2.4 Legislative Advocacy Infrastructure

- Develop and disseminate policy position resources (e.g., briefs or position papers) and engage in coordinated policy discussions with legislators and partners to advance systems improvements impacting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including efforts aligned with Alaska’s Shared Vision.
 - Comments:
 - None
 - Moves toward the goal, system change, do not cut.

Activity 2.5 Beneficiary Advisory Board Participation

- Participate as a beneficiary advisory board member to the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority contributing input and guidance to support systems coordination, policy alignment, and initiatives that impact people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
 - Comments:
 - None
 - Moves toward the goal, system change, do not cut.

Activity 6.1 Inclusive Emergency Systems Advocacy

- Support advocacy and coordination with state agencies, emergency management entities, and community partners to elevate the needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in emergency planning, accessible communication, inclusive sheltering, and recovery efforts.
 - Comments:
 - None
 - Moves toward the goal, system change, do not cut.

OTHER

Chelsea Burke reported that in addition to offering Council trainings, staff have begun sending Council members a monthly e-mail update. The intent is to bridge the gap in information about what the Council staff is doing between quarterly Council and committee meetings. The staff would appreciate feedback on the usefulness of the information.

TIME AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Upcoming Legislative Committee meetings:

- May 14, 2026, 3:00 – 4:30 p.m. (Zoom)
- June 11, 2026, 3:00 – 4:30 p.m. (Zoom)

ADJOURNMENT

Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus **MOVED** to adjourn at 4:31, **SECONDED** by Shelly Vendetti-Vuckovich. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**.