GOVERNOR'S ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR EXCEPTIONAL CITIZENS (GACEC)
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
7:00PM March 18, 2025
VIRTUAL MEETING

MEMBERS PRESENT: Al Cavalier, Nancy Cordrey, Bill Doolittle, Karen Eller, Ann Fisher, Tika Hartsock, Thomas Keeton, Jessica Mensack, Molly Merrill, Beth Mineo, Maria Olivere, Trenee Parker, Jennifer Pulcinella, and Stefanie Ramirez.

OTHERS PRESENT: Harley Doolittle, Mindi Failing, Feta Fernsler, Maxwell Lasher, Dale Matusevich/Department of Education (DOE), Brad Melvin, Theresa Muschiatti (ALS interpreter), Kathleen Stephen, Jeri Turner (DOE), Maureen Whalen, Drew Wilson/Division of Medicaid and Medical Assistance (DMMA), and Samantha Wooten.

STAFF PRESENT: Pam Weir/Executive Director, Kathie Cherry/Office Manager, Lacie Spence/Administrative Coordinator and Theresa Moore/Administrative Support Specialist.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Matt Denn, Kristina Horton, Erika Powell, Brenné Shepperson, Meedra Surratte and Erik Warner.

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS: Ann Fisher called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. There was a quorum of members present. The motion to approve the March agenda was made by Trenee Parker and Bill Doolittle seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Molly Merrill made a motion to accept the February minutes as amended during the meeting and Thomas Keeton seconded the motion. The motion to accept the minutes as amended unanimously passed. Jennifer Pulcinella made a motion to approve the February Financial report. The motion was seconded by Trenee Parker. The motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: There were no public comments tonight.

- **DREW WILSON FROM DMMA:** Drew Wilson, the director of the Division of Medicaid and Medical Assistance, presented to Council. Drew discussed the uncertain times in Congress and the potential changes to Medicaid, including a request to cut $880 billion from the program. Drew explained that is not quite accurate. The Committee of Jurisdiction, Energy, and Commerce has been asked to cut $880 billion from the programs of this jurisdiction, which includes Medicare. It also includes things like

climate change funding, Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and adjacent health care items.
He explained that this could involve repealing Biden administration rules, changing the structure of the program from an entitlement to a block grant, or shifting costs to the states. Drew also mentioned the possibility of work requirements and the potential impact on the states' administrative burden. He encouraged the attendees to engage with their Congressional delegation and share their stories to humanize Medicaid.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

POLICY AND LAW COMMITTEE: There was no discussion on the legal memo for this meeting.

INFANT AND EARLY CHILDHOOD COMMITTEE: The Committee discussed the recent meeting of the Public Education Funding Commission (PEFC) and their recent published findings. The (PEFC) is charged by Senate Concurrent Resolution, 201 of the 152nd General Assembly to continue the comprehensive review of public education, funding for all students and populations served by district and charter schools, develop a roadmap of recommendations to implement improvements to the public education funding system and serve as an ongoing body to review the funding annually and recommend updates and changes. One of their recommendations was a universal pre-k with the influx of additional children entering the Local Education Agency (LEAs). It's more important than ever to make sure that all children have access to quality pre-k that understands their unique perspective. Universal learning in classrooms that reflect the actual population would help with the teacher shortages as well as assisting existing teachers and other kids. Click on this link to see the American Institutes for Research (AIR report). With the recent Presidential plan to dismantle the Department of Education, the Committee discussed the thought of putting the birth to three program transition on hold.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH COMMITTEE: The Committee discussed their three goals and related action items and updates. They also discussed revising their goals a bit by eliminating the second goal that was related to School Resource Officers (SROs) because that goal is now handled by the Ad Hoc committee. They discussed updates to the first goal of reviewing due process decisions and began revising the rubric draft that will be used to review due process decisions.

ADULT AND TRANSITION SERVICES COMMITTEE: Discussion took place around the Committee goals. Their first goal is to focus on the Class Action Settlement Agreement for 18 to 22-year-olds and how to support families. They want to create some informational materials to share. Their second goal will be to focus on 22 to 30-year-olds for transition and connecting all the resources and groups we currently work with. Another goal is to share updates on the Prison Education Ad Hoc Committee. The final goal is to share updates on the DelDHub Advisory Committee.

DDOE REPORT: Dale presented the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) grant application process, highlighting the upcoming public meetings and the need for input from the

community. He discussed the regulatory requirements and the mechanisms in place to ensure Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) is being provided for students with disabilities. Dale also mentioned the Significant Disproportionality (SigDispro) process, which involves identifying and addressing over-identification of students with disabilities. He shared the State's financial support for IDEA, which has increased by over $250 million over the past 10 years. Dale also discussed the high needs funds, which are now allocated on a reimbursement basis to avoid sending money back to the federal government. He invited feedback on how IDEA dollars are being spent and new ideas for spending.

Dale knows there's been a lot of angst around what's happening at the US. Department of Education. He received some information from of the US. Department of Education, with some of the reductions in staff that were happening towards the end of the week. Most of those positions that were cut, or in that reduction phase were around the Covid pandemic relief funds. Most of those positions were term appointments, or they accepted the voluntary resignation opportunities that were provided. Dale has been assured by the US. Department of Ed, that there have been no cuts to the Office for Special Ed Programs (OSEP) or within the Rehab Services Administration. None of these reductions in staff are to affect anything that is happening within the Elementary and Secondary Education Act or Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). They will not affect anything in the work supporting individuals with disabilities and their families. And again, no employees from (OSEP) or rehab service or rehabilitation services administrations were part of those reductions.

CHAIR REPORT: Ann reminded the Council about the upcoming GACEC elections for Chair, Vice Chair and a Member At Large. Trenee Parker and Tika Hartsock are the Nominating Committee Members for this year's elections. Please reach out to them if you are interested in nominating yourself or someone else. Ann spoke about the changes going on in Delaware, with the change in Governor, Lieutenant Governor and the Federal changes. Celebrate and Educate Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) day is July 26th this year. Kristen Harvey, from Delaware Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC), has offered to share all the insight and information, if any councils would like to have a celebration if Legislative Mall is available. Legislators could be invited and not have a conflict of interest because they are not in session at that time. Ann announced the guests and those Council members who were absent.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

- Pam shared a nomination process for the upcoming election just before the meeting. She will have staff share it with Council Members tomorrow via email.
- Staff is working on policies, processes and procedures. The Leadership Committee will add to their agenda each month time to review the policy and procedures.
- Pam received the list of Exceptional Children's Resources (ECR) staff and their specific areas of expertise. She will be sending that information out to the Leadership Committee. Since the Policy and Law Committee did not meet, she will also send the Policy and Law Memo to the Leadership Committee to review.

- Pam reminded the Council that we are hearing from our Congressional Delegation that they need to hear your stories. They are using them in litigation and when speaking on the floor. GACEC has created one pagers to make it easier for everyone to know what numbers to call and what website to click on to share their stories. She met with Congresswomen Sarah McBride who shared a specific Medicaid link. Pam will update the one pager to include this new information.
- Pam shared that Molly Merrill, and her family met with the Congressional Delegation to share how Medicaid changes would directly impact her family.
- Ann Fisher and Pam will be attending the Disability Policy Seminar April 7th-9th. Pam is the State Captain for this seminar and is working directly with National Members of the ARC to schedule Hill Day visits on the 9th. They have meetings scheduled with Senator Chris Coons and Lisa Blunt-Rochester. She is working with Congresswomen Sarah McBride to schedule a meeting also. Molly Merrill and her family plan to go with them to meet with Congresswomen McBride to share their story.
- The letter was sent to Lt Governor Gay about the review of Governor Myers Transition Report. Pam has been texting back and forth with Lt. Governor Gay to set up a date to meet with her to discuss Council's concerns around the report. One of the areas of concern that GACEC is not really focused on is funding. Pam had discussed this in the last Leadership Committee meeting. They are going to take that on in their meetings.

AD HOC COMMITTEE REPORTS:

RESTRAINTS/SECLUSION & SRO:

- The new Ad Hoc Committee on Restraints/Seclusion and School Resource Officers is in the process of inviting key stakeholders.
- These stakeholders are being selected both for their viewpoints and for their potential support of the final recommendations.
- The Committee is summarizing the evidence base to make it more accessible.
- This summary will help guide deliberations and support the committee's recommendations.

OUTSIDE COMMITTEE REPORTS:

EXTENDED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES SUBCOMMITTEE: Bill Doolittle reported that the Committee met before this meeting. They worked on preparing the annual report. They would also like the person who fills the Director of the Office of Early Childhood Intervention position to speak and go over the extended school year initiatives.

ADJOURNMENT: Trenee Parker made a motion that was seconded by Jen Pulcinella to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed and Ann adjourned the meeting at 9:06 pm.