



GOVERNOR'S ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR EXCEPTIONAL CITIZENS (GACEC)
Leadership Committee Meeting
6:00 PM, February 5, 2026
VIRTUAL MEETING

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bill Doolittle, Ann Fisher, Tika Hartsock, Jessica Heesh Mensack, Molly Merrill, Erika Powell, and Jennifer Pulcinella.

STAFF PRESENT: Pam Weir/Executive Director

GUESTS PRESENT: None

MEMBERS ABSENT: Al Cavalier (On Leave of Absence), Beth Mineo, Trenee Parker, and Meedra Surratte

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS:

Bill called the meeting to order, and the agenda was approved without changes. The minutes from a previous meeting were reviewed and approved with a motion from Jennifer.

PUBLIC COMMENT: No public comment tonight.

DISCUSSION:

Pam presented a draft document titled the "leverage packet" which includes background information, terminology, and a proposed policy on council leverage authority. She explained that the document is intended to provide guidance to the Leadership Committee and full Council on managing letters and requests, staff follow-ups, and FOIA-related matters. Bill acknowledged the document as a good starting point but noted that it does not cover additional Council options, which he and others may discuss further. Pam emphasized the importance of clear language for new members and expressed confidence in the document's alignment with code and regulations.

FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) and Escalation Decision Process

The group discussed a decision tree for handling requests and escalations, with Pam explaining that while FOIA might not be required initially, they could proceed directly to legislative escalation given current circumstances. Bill noted that FOIA requests might be challenged on standing, but Pam clarified that while agency-to-agency FOIA requests are generally not recommended, they are not strictly prohibited if done in the public interest. The discussion concluded with Pam seeking feedback on the proposed process, acknowledging the need for clearer guidance while avoiding adding to everyone's workload.

Legal Guidance and DAG (Deputy Attorney General) Conflict

The group discussed the need for legal guidance and the challenges with their current DAG, Carla Jarosz, who has a conflict of interest due to her role with DOE. They plan to meet with the Attorney General to seek an unbiased DAG and are considering developing Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with the Department of Education to govern their working relationship. Pam and Bill plan to compile a list of recurring themes from letters sent over the past five years to use as a starting point for drafting MOUs.

Department of Education Strategy Discussion

The group discussed various strategies for addressing challenges with the Department of Education, including state complaints, data requests, and legislative engagement. Bill highlighted the need to reset the relationship with the Department and suggested using specific examples of mandates to push for collaboration. Pam emphasized the importance of utilizing a leverage document to guide actions and suggested adding a section on the utilization of counsel to the annual report. The group also discussed the potential of the Inspector General's office as a future tool for addressing non-compliance. Jennifer provided updates on the presentation of a document by the Inter Agency Coordinating Council (ICC) and mentioned upcoming meetings on the Redding Consortium and the Public Education Funding Commission (PEFC). The conversation ended with a brief discussion about scheduling conflicts for a future meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was officially adjourned at 7:05 pm.

NEW ACTION ITEMS:

- Pam: Send out links and language regarding the state complaint process to the group.
- Pam: Pull together a draft list of letters sent in the last year (or 5 years) and recurring themes, especially those covering basic mandate and epilogue language, and send to Bill in advance of the meeting with Michael Saylor, Dr. Monica Gant, and others.
- Pam: Reach out to ICC (or relevant contact) to arrange their presentation to full council at the next meeting.
- Pam: Attend the Redding Consortium meeting on February 12th and gather information to share with the group.
- Bill: Attend the PEFC public meeting at Stanton on February 12th.
- Pam: Follow up with Dale to confirm meeting time (3pm instead of 11am) and coordinate with Bill as needed.
- Tika: Ensure that Special Education Partnership for the Amicable Resolution of Conflict (SPARC) facilitates the upcoming meeting once the agenda is set, and await scheduling details.
- All: Review the leverage document and provide feedback or additional questions to Pam.
- Pam: Send the compiled list of questions for the DAG and Public Integrity Commission to both entities once additional questions are received from the group.
- Leadership Committee/Group: Consider adding a section to the annual report regarding utilization of Council and Council's efforts to address underutilization (for next year's annual report).

- Individuals with Complex Medical Conditions and Education Ad hoc (ICMCE (or relevant committee member): Draft and send a formal data request letter to the relevant LEA regarding ICMCE data, potentially for presentation to full Council.
- Pam and Bill: Be prepared to discuss and provide specific examples/issues at the February 25th meeting with Michael Saylor, Dr. Gant, and others, including gaps in the system and collaboration issues.
- Pam: Schedule a meeting with Jon Sheehan (new State Board of Education President) to discuss GACEC's relationship and representation issues.
- Bill: Continue efforts to obtain and analyze equalization data sets from the relevant entities for scoring purposes.