



STATE OF WASHINGTON

GOVERNOR'S COMMITTEE ON DISABILITY ISSUES AND EMPLOYMENT

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Governor's Committee on Disability Issues & Employment (GCDE)

General Membership Zoom Meeting

October 28, 2022, 10:00 am - 3:00 pm

MINUTES

- 10:05 A.M. Welcome and Announcements – Patricia Bauccio, GCDE Chairperson**
(10 mins)
- **Call the Meeting to Order** – meeting called to order at 10:05 am after a brief period of checking in with those who joined early.
 - **Approval of Meeting Minutes** – Member Patti Dailey-Shives moved, Member Kevin Frankeberger seconded, no oppositions or abstentions, [minutes from May 13](#) meeting approved as is.
 - **Approval of Agenda** – Member Patti Dailey-Shives moved, Member Laurie Schindler seconded, no oppositions or abstentions, agenda approved as is.
 - **Elizabeth will confirm roll call of members present** – present for [members](#) were Laurie Schindler, Lucas Doelman, Cullynn Foxlee, Kevin Frankeberger, Damiana Harper, Amy Cloud, Bill Kinyon, Patti Dailey-Shives, Marsha Cutting, Nathan Hoston, Candace Dickson, Clarence Eskridge, Warren Weissman, Larry Gorton, Pat Bauccio, Christa Hewitt, and Kristin DiBiase. Absent or excused were Yvonne Bussler-White, Matt Nash, Reg George, Daniel Ledgett, Andy Song, and Megan Mason-Todd.
Present for [associate members](#) were Shelby Satko, Bek Moras, Kimberly Meck, Douglas Burkhalter, Brandi Monts, Earnest Covington, and Tania May.
Accommodations providers were Connie Church (CART), Polly MacLean (interpreter) and Dani Larimore (interpreter).
[Staff](#) present were Emily Heike, Elizabeth Gordon, Elaine Stefanowicz, and Ryan Bondroff.
Guests were Courtney Williams (panelist), Mark Leeper (panelist), Karen Williams (community member), Tammy Bowen (community member),

Anna Nepomuceno (panelist), Dana Floyd (community member), Sam Blazina (panelist), Rod Duncan (panelist), Melinda Bocci (panelist), Michelle Williams (community member), and Melissa Matczak (community member).

Emeritus members were Dan Eberle.

➤ **House Keeping** – *housekeeping items were reviewed as listed below.*

First, does everyone have what they need to be able to participate today?

Remember to keep your phone on mute when you aren't speaking.

Please say your name prior to speaking so everyone can follow the conversation, and in respect for our interpreters and CART.

Please take turns and raise your hand, or if you are unable to use that command, just let us know you would like to speak.

Public comment period at the end of the agenda was noted.

10:15 A.M. GCDE Chair's Report – *Patricia Bauccio, GCDE Chairperson (25 mins)*

- **Discussion of members at large** – *Pat shared that we will be seeking nominations to fill two member-at-large positions starting in the 2023 calendar year, and that their role is to be the voice of the general membership on the GCDE Coordinating Committee, which is GCDE's executive board that steers committee activities, plans these general membership meetings, and consists of subcommittee chairs and staff otherwise. She shared that Elaine sent an email on 9/28 asking for nominations, including self-nominations, but was unaware of any having been received yet. She asked folks to make nominations during the meeting in the chat, and shared that we would be conducting a vote afterwards based on the nominations. She mentioned that we would reach out to people on Monday, other than self-nominations, to see if they were interested before including their name on the ballot. She shared that current subcommittee chairs (Candace Dickson, Laurie Schindler, Damiana Harper, Warren Weissman, Megan Mason-Todd, Kristin DiBiase, Pat Bauccio, and Yvonne Bussler-White) are not eligible to be nominated, as they already serve on the coordinating committee. She also noted that this makes up about 1/3 of the committee. Finally, she shared that she hopes to make the appointments prior to her departure at the start of the year, but that the new chair could make reappointments.*

A number of nominations were received to the host via the chat.

- **Chair nominations** – *Pat shared that a name has been submitted to [Boards & Commissions](#) for a replacement chair when her term ends at the end of the year, but that the information is not public yet. We will keep everyone informed. Elizabeth will share an update, if not Pat. We will appoint an interim chair in December if needed. Pat also shared that Kristin DiBiase has been appointed to chair the legislative workgroup in 2023, and Matt Nash and Yvonne Bussler-White will be cochairing the [Awards](#) subcommittee. Megan Mason-Todd will be switching roles with Warren Weissman to chair [Membership](#) and Accessible Communities, respectively.*
- **Succession planning update** – *Pat thanked everyone for their willingness to lead. She shared that succession planning has been an important focus during her tenure as chair. She appreciates the direction the committee has taken and the enthusiasm everyone has displayed thus far. She is excited for folks continued energy to move our [mission](#) and [Executive Order](#) forward.*
- *Pat fielded questions about her report at this time. People mentioned having not received the Member-at-large email from Elaine. Elaine shared that she would resend the email presently. A question was asked about the time commitment for being a member-at-large. It was shared that the team meets 3x/year for a day about 4-6 weeks in advance of these meetings. There may also be some emails to respond to, and could feasibly be 2-3 other meetings scheduled per year depending on other tasks or topics that may arise, but that the commitment still wouldn't be classified as weekly. The roles and responsibilities were reiterated, and folks were thanked for their consideration.*

10:40 A.M. Executive Director's Report – *Elizabeth Gordon, GCDE Executive Director (10 mins) Elizabeth shared that she has stepped back from attending the day-to-day meetings related to subcommittee activities for the past quarter, and focused more on executive level items. Folks may know that her spouse is experiencing a serious health issue at this time, and she appreciates others having stepped in. She also provided updates on what she has been working on otherwise, such as the fair housing training requirement by real estate agents as a part of their licensing ([SSB 5378](#)). Additionally, she has been working on the group related to [SB 5793](#) related to providing stipends to*

those providing their time and expertise of lived experience on a board or commission. The office of Equity is charged with developing guidance, alongside a group of others. The draft was just distributed for review, and she can share it with the group if desired. The Executive order around diversity in state government ([EO 22-02](#)), as well as implementing Pro-Equity Anti-Racism plans ([EO 22-04](#)) are also in the implementation process. Currently she has been sitting on ESD's PEAR team to provide the disability perspective. GCDE has also been directed as a part of these executive orders to rewrite the executive order around disability employment in state government ([EO 13-02](#)). Elizabeth paused for questions at this point.

A question was asked about the ability to convene a consortium of sorts to provide additional input on these draft documents as they relate to items such as a centralized fund for accommodations, supported employment, the hiring process etc. and to bring other perspectives. Elizabeth shared that these executive orders are internally facing but will have an impact on the way that services are provided to the public (in a more equitable way as a result).

A question was also asked if culture is targeted in these executive orders, in terms of making the work environment at state agencies more disability friendly, so that folks feel safe to disclose. Elizabeth shared that the draft was shared with a lot of different audiences for input, as opposed to having a specific workgroup, but one of the goals was to cover the various phases of employment and addressing inequitable systems being made accessible (to include recruitment, the hiring process, as well as the working environment).

A question was asked about how folks might get more involved, and Elizabeth shared that the revised draft of EO 13-02 regarding equity in state government employment was included in your meeting [packets](#), and that she would love to hear people's thoughts and feedback on it, and would be happy to convene a meeting if that would work best.

A comment was made about the tendency to center race in EDI work, sometimes to the exclusion of disability or other areas, even in state government. The participant shared that while this does not necessarily always extend to clients, they have encountered it as a state employee, which they find disheartening. They are of the opinion that there is definitely more we could be doing in this regard to make people feel valued.

Elizabeth shared that one of the things the EO requires is for state agencies to develop one plan to address PEAR topics, to include access and belonging for people with disabilities, thus requiring disability to be a part of the equity equation – all in one place as a part of the overall plan for increasing equity in state government. The office of equity will also have the power to enforce and ensure accountability around these goals.

A pin was put in the discussion at this point in respect for the break and upcoming panel.

10:50 A.M. Break (10 mins) – *shortened to 7 minutes to keep to time*

11:00 A.M. Legislative Priority Panel – *Elizabeth Gordon, GCDE Executive Director (1 hour) Panelists:*

Mark Leeper (**ML**), Executive Director, INDEx

Anna Nepomuceno (**AN**), Director of Public Policy, NAMI (*joining late*)

Courtney Williams (**CW**), Executive Director, CEA

Earnest Covington III (**EC**), Director, ODHH

Elizabeth shared that the purpose of the panel was to get a sense of what are some of the important issues that are happening with our partner organizations, and so we've invited four such representatives to join us this morning and have a discussion.

Questions:

Tell us a little about your organization, what is your focus?

CW: *Courtney said hello and thanked us for having her, and also let us know to slow her down as she speaks if needed. She shared she is the executive director of [Community Employment Alliance](#), which is a WA state membership association comprised of employment service providers who serve individuals with disabilities in the workforce within supported employment. She shared that they make up roughly 72% of the [Developmental Disabilities Administration's](#) provider network across the state working on items such as system inefficiencies as well. Their goal is to represent individuals with disabilities, recognize when there's more work to be done, and work on legislative implementation so that it is reflective of individuals with disabilities in the workforce. They also conduct advocacy around legislation, including a sustainability rate increase.*

EC: *Earnest greeted everyone and shared his name sign. He serves as the director for the [Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing](#). ODHH provides services for all deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, deaf plus, and late deafened individuals - their focus is on the statewide needs of this population. They offer many programs, such as equipment available for use, statewide regional service provision at seven different centers, and community service. They also provide consultation, training, on-the-job support, information and referral for equipment or technology, data and statistics etc. They also administer the statewide [master contract for sign language interpreters](#) of various types. This includes Medicaid related services, or otherwise. Their focus is increasing communication access so that people in their community can have equal access to important news regarding what's happening in the word and otherwise, including information about emergency*

management. Their other focus is on interpreter rates, and addressing any issues or discrepancies otherwise that may arise within state government or otherwise surrounding interpreters, to include the interpreter shortage and increasing the available pool of interpreters to allow for adequate coverage statewide and filling those gaps.

ML: Mark thanked everyone for their time and shared that they are the executive director of the [Disability Action Center](#), including the new program in Spokane called [INDEx](#), or Inland Northwest Disability Experience. He is excited to participate alongside of GCDE. His role is as one of the five centers for independent living ([CILs](#)) in WA. They are non-profits run by folks with disabilities as a cross-disability organization providing an array of independent living services. They have been around for a while serving southeastern Idaho and Washington, including the new program in Spokane. They were developed under the [Washington State Independent Living Council](#) as a part of [Title VII of the rehabilitation act](#) of [WIOA](#), and work collaboratively together. He is grateful to be here and for the opportunity to learn about what others are doing. He wishes to support one another and work together better to advocate for each other. He also shared about Blue Path ([blue-path.org](#)), which is an online registry of business and their access related to the ADA (mobility, sensory, and disability accessibility otherwise). Businesses listed include medical offices, hotels, and restaurants. There is representation from 19 states currently, to include AK most recently. It is all free to businesses. The DAC supports and manages that and will continue to do so, provided they can find adequate funding. They are currently in the process of moving it over to a new, more robust platform. Recreation access is something they're also working to include, such as parks and trails. Strengthening community overall through accessibility is an overarching goal of theirs.

Tell us a little about wins and challenges over the last year

EC: Earnest thanked GCDE for the invite and shared that he just recently joined ODHH as the executive director 4 months ago and cannot speak much to this issue presently as he is currently working with DSHS and the ALISA (ODHH's housing organization and division) to get up to speed on this. Currently, he is adhering to their recommendations, and will be sure to report out at a subsequent meeting about any legislative issues. He does know that access in interpreting services is a priority. He does not have anything else to add at this time regarding legislation but will keep us apprised in the next year or two regarding ODHH's legislative priorities.

ML: Mark shared that he checked with their Spokane staff to discuss what they've been working on. Statewide, one of their largest successes as of late has been in developing relationships, particularly within the CILs and others. They have some dynamic new leadership locally and at the statewide level, which has been great, some very good people are involved in the work. They have also had some successes lately in terms of

showing parents alternatives to guardianship. They are also still working on transitioning folks out of institutions. Housing remains a difficult challenge. Transportation is also an issue. However, some partnerships exist locally, and providers have stepped forward to help with some of the rural connections. They are hoping to partner with others as well. Getting the center in Spokane has been a huge win overall. Funding approval was granted late due to the pandemic at the beginning of last October, so it was slow to get up and running, and there have been a lot of changes in wage structures etc. that have contributed to the challenge, but they have a great team in place. One other neat thing is a program called [Veteran Directed Care](#) with the VA that allows individuals that need assistance to stay in their home to qualify and employ whomever they may like (such as a spouse) to provide that assistance with wages at up to \$20 an hour. This is a great program that is being utilized and is allowing veterans an opportunity to manage and be in control of their own lives with the people they want to have in their lives, which is exciting.

CW: Courtney thanked Elizabeth and the meeting organizers and shared that she is grateful for the timing of this meeting each year because it allows for a pause and puts things in perspective during the interim between legislative sessions. It is always a great reminder to keep positive and stay the course. She thanked the other panelists for their contributions, as well, and has made a note of them. With regards to CEA's wins and opportunities for growth, she shared that overall, they had an incredible session as well. She reiterated their purpose as stated in question #1 of this panel (as an employment service provider for individuals receiving supported employment statewide). Their main goal is to ensure quality of services, which has also been a challenge lately, due to the capacity issue faced right now (with 67% of providers concerned about taking on any more clients or expanding). This causing a subsequent crisis when it comes to employment and infrastructure statewide. The pandemic brought to light the value of supported employment when it comes to essential workers being the folks that are supported. They remain proud of this and want to continue to grow. Last year, they had both of their priorities on a bill, which were the provider rate increase and also statewide school to work on the same bill. It was progressing well and had bipartisan support, which is always great, and also had strong sponsors which is critical. It is even better when your sponsors are in the Senate Ways and Means committee or the House appropriations committee, especially if the bill is going to have a large fiscal note. In this case, although the bill was doing great, eventually the rate increase was removed. Instead, the DDA was directed by the legislature in February to do a comprehensive rate study, due by October 2022. CEA felt it was critical that they be represented on the study committee. Fortunately, they were invited to the table as partners, along with counties. A challenge they often see in the system is that all the moving pieces don't always work

well with one another because roles and responsibilities aren't always defined, so getting everyone in the same room really helps with clarity and understanding from all levels. The rate study was a lot of work, and a shoutout in particular is owed to the head of the study. It became clear the people often don't know what all goes into supported employment, or the value of it, or how it is paid. So that was something they had to work to build understanding around. This way, people know what is going into the requested hourly rate, and what that means. So, this rate study will be a really educational tool for folks, and was provided in your meeting [packets](#). The average client gets about 12 hours of supported employment a month while working roughly 20 hours a week. So, the \$101/hr. doesn't go far in terms of covering transportation, accreditations, required training, etc. The goal is for this to set the tone for our community of providers that has been historically underfunded on how they can seek an equitable rate increase. They want to be supportive of everyone who needs to get paid fairly and are happy to be the point of contact for that from their experience with having gone through the rate study, and encouraged people to reach out. The community of employment providers has been communicating better than ever, perhaps due to the pandemic. With the new leadership at DDC as Mark mentioned, and thinking about how to move forward with [North Star](#) in a way that's truly inclusive. They also have great leaders and partners at [the Arc](#) and [CAC](#), and are all starting to show up in the same place which is critical. The state is beginning to recognize how we really need to invest properly in disabilities and what the value of disabilities is when we talk about employment. Together we are changing the narrative of supported employment to something that is reinforced by our communities. There is still a lot of work to do, but they are excited to do it, and it is progressing nicely.

The last two questions were rolled together in the interest of time, and it was noted that the GCDE's legislative workgroup is fairly new.

Looking ahead to the next legislative session what is on your radar? How does your group identify its legislative priorities?

***ML:** Mark shared that he was glad to hear that GCDE has a new legislative workgroup and is in the same boat. The IL community has been beginning to develop some stronger relationships. He feels that statewide any cross-disability group should be in a position to look at issues like legislative priorities and be in connection with other groups. He has not sure that has historically been done as well as it could have, but is something he would like to see going forward. The SPIL (state plan for independent living) that every state has is something they do. It is planning for state and federal money that comes into the state that goes out to each of the federally funded CILs and WASILC. It includes the IL network across the state, and they just conducted survey that has been going out around the state to gather information and find out what the priorities are for people*

with disabilities and their friends, family members, and service providers. To top included transportation, and housing, which is unsurprising. So, a survey was how they gathered data. They are still working to develop a process for how to put a specific goal in the state plan that they might work on for three years and then tie into legislation. They have also connected with other groups at legislative advocacy days and heard their issues, to include partners like [Disability Rights Washington](#). Those have been the ones that they've responded to, such as homelessness and the incidence of disability among those who are homeless as a huge issue. They tend to take a lens of looking at specific issues and then try to see if there is legislation happening around that, if other folks are looking into that and how they can partner. Each CIL conducts their own analysis of that and creates individual work plans that tie into the statewide plan to develop the highest priority based upon the grass roots things that are happening out in the community, and assess what they can have an impact on. They have also had a project on statewide emergency management and making sure that people with disabilities are involved in the planning and implementation of emergency plans and education of first responders, etc. with WASILC. He is seeking to be more involved in these issues in WA with GCDE.

CW: Courtney clarified the questions and then shared that CEA has several folks who have been involved in this work and lobbying for many years. This helps them to be well informed. She believes that process is important. She thinks that something critical is to understand the timeline of what the year to come is going to be comprised of and divide it into months. There is always a lot going on in our community, and legislators are very busy too. And while the interim between sessions seems long, sometimes they tend to feel shorter and shorter, so it is important to understand your timeline. From there, communicating with your legislative body is important. For CEA, it is their members. Within their bylaws, the way they identify and proceed with legislative priorities is setting forth a survey to the membership to solicit feedback on what is important to them in the coming year for CEA to support while educating them as well, to include years past, since some folks can't always be as heavily involved. They are given roughly a month to fill out that legislative priority assessment. Their legislative committee co-chairs and herself as the director disseminate that, and collate the qualitative and quantitative data. They then present it to the legislative committee to get clear on the things that they are going to be moving forward with, which is something they have learned. For example, last year, they pursued the two priorities that she mentioned earlier of the rate increase and statewide school to work. The statewide school to work passed, which they are honored and excited to be a part of that great opportunity, since previously only 7 counties had that and now it is open to all 39 statewide. And then with the rate increase, that got removed, so what they were left with in the end was more work and the same rate in the interim (which already was not sustainable). So that was

a takeaway, that while it may seem self-serving, they will only be pursuing the one item of the rate increase this coming legislative session. They cannot afford to do more and maintain quality. Learning that and making sure it is clear to their members with good communication has been a priority. After they identify the priorities, they begin collecting data and working with partners. They are fortunate to be able to have the rate study as a tool to reference now, which they have shared. They also formulate a 1-pager to communicate their issues clearly and concisely and what is on their radar. Also on their list is caseload forecasting.

***EC:** Believes there are two issues, the first is communication equity, to include statewide open captioning for movie theaters, television, all public places to allow equal access. So, they are working with other groups on that legislation. This includes also access to the legislature, such as hearings, to make sure that CART, interpreters, assistive listening etc. are provided. This has been something that has been lagging behind, so they want to close that gap. They also want to increase communication access or equity in general, so for example, to ensure that when someone needing communication supports arrives at an appointment or in a setting, that access is built in and available as a best practice. They also want to try to work with the legislature to address the interpreter shortage, including more funds for interpreter training programs in WA. The former program in the Seattle area, which had a good reputation and graduated many highly qualified interpreters, was closed. Now the pool is dwindling for various reasons, so that there are not enough interpreters, and the supply to meet the demand is lacking. There also needs to be sufficient interpreters to match qualified interpreters with the appropriate situation, to include different knowledge bases, interests, and settings. That is something that has been frustrating to people. When new interpreters are onboarded, they will need to go through the training process to be able to interpret successfully in certain situations, etc. So, the short version is that they need to ensure that the interpreters are readily available to meet the needs of the community, however they might arise. This has been a struggle and they are hopefully that the legislature can help. ODHH would like to be able to provide the direct services, access, and specialized services but will need more interpreting staff to do so (perhaps in the form of a dedicated unit with full-time staff positions expanded). This would also allow for the needed skills and compensation that equates to good wages. This is a need in all areas of life for the deaf community to have support and an adequate pool of interpreters to meet the need. The goal would be to have better case management, increase the pool of readily available interpreters, and remove barriers. This is something they hope to work with the legislature on improving.*

Our last panelist joined at the end due to a conflict and was asked to address the questions, to include an introduction, overview of their organization, priorities, & wins.

AN: Anna shared that she is the director of public policy for [NAMI Washington](#), which is the National Alliance on Mental Illness. It is the nation's largest grassroots advocacy organization supporting everyone affected by behavioral health conditions through a multi-pronged approach of legislative advocacy. So, there are three tiers to the organization. There is the national office, the state office, and then regional affiliates. Washington state has 20 regional affiliates that work alongside the state office. Their goal is to raise awareness and reduce stigma around mental health, as well as provide educational programs and support for families and individuals affected by mental illness. So, they offer peer led courses, support groups, youth programs, and also advocate. Her role comes in with leading the grass roots efforts and also the policy research while they advocate for bills during the legislative session. For the upcoming legislative session, they are looking at including social, emotional, behavioral, and mental health skills in the definition of basic education. One of the challenges faced around this issue is that there is not enough focus on preventative care. And including these sorts of items in our definition of basic education for K-12 would help in that preventative care for youth. Right now, suicide is the second leading cause of death in WA state for young people from 10-24 years of age, and COVID has just made that worse. So, this bill is on the list of their priorities that they will be advocating strongly for. Another one is to create a prescribing psychologist credential. A similar bill was introduced last session that didn't move. So, there will be a bill that is very similar to the one from last year that basically creates that credential for prescribing psychologists. This would increase access to medication. Right now, there is a shortage of prescribers, especially if you are a patient on Medicaid. There are barely, if any, psychiatrists that accept Medicaid. Oftentimes, these patients are referred to a nurse practitioner, and even that is limited. So, there is a need to increase the number of available prescribers. There will also be additional legislation regarding the new 988 crisis response system that they will definitely be championing. Finally, there is also Medicaid parity for behavioral health workers. There was a seven percent increase in rates last year, but it is not enough. Right now, there is a behavioral healthcare worker shortage, similar to the other worker shortages. But especially if we wish to flesh out our state's behavioral health and crisis response systems, we need to have more qualified people to address these issues, and if we're going to incentivize people to take this career path, we need to pay them more to do so.

Questions from our group....

A question was posed for Earnest. A member was a part of the union, and noted that they have union represented interpreters for foreign language, and was wondering if this is something that could work for ASL interpreters as well, which would also give them an opportunity for the living wage he mentioned. They were wondering if this had been considered.

Earnest responded that it is something that they had been considering, because of course with the union, it's inclusive. Previously they hadn't felt the need to set that up with the union, as it would be the same as interpreters working through the state. But they do want the interpreters to feel as though it's equal and fair because right now they are all under contract working under different agencies, which is nice for setting things up. But this way there would be benefits, etc., so if that's something of interest for the interpreters and the community it is definitely something to consider. He thanked the member for bringing that up and thinks it is a great idea. Currently, they have not started that discussion yet or thinking about how it would look, but he appreciates the feedback.

The member commented that if the interpreters went through a union certification department by department similarly to what was just done at LNI, the thing that's good about it is the inclusivity, the wages, and the fact that there is no disparity. It's also a way to make sure the people working under contract get a minimum number of hours, have benefits, and that they have the same rights and responsibilities as other employees.

Earnest agreed and shared that currently different interpreters have different varying wages and rights under their company and contract, and that some of this can vary based upon experience, but having a standard as far as what training is etc. is a hot topic for interpreters right now and how the cost rates compare to interpreters who do Video Remote Interpreting versus in-person, for example. What are those differences, can we alleviate some of that confusion, and should it be the same or different, and can it be standardized in terms of the difference? He appreciated the great feedback again.

A comment was made about the need to advocate for closed captioning in movies and television, and working to encourage that, but it being a slow process that doesn't allow for a good communication method in the meantime. The participant was unsatisfied with how that process has been going, and that there is a lot of time and a lot of steps and a backlog to go through and things that need to happen. They felt that the focus needs to be on television, and that the new law recently that said all businesses and services must have closed captioning on by default as a requirement is not doing a good job of following through with that.

The participant was thanked for their comment and consideration, and Earnest agreed that this is a big issue that is not currently being sufficiently addressed when it comes to television, movies, and public places. He believes that we need to try to go through legislation versus trying to address it individually. WACs need to be setup so that by law there are policies and rules that can be enforced. He is happy to help work on that and thinks effective communication is key.

Another participant expressed their appreciation for the emotional wellness education that is being proposed in schools. They are amazed at how mental health is one of the few places without preventative care. COVID brought to light that people needed support, but the system was so backed up that nothing could be done unless you were in crisis. So, they are really appreciative of that and are wanting to support it.

A final question was posed about how the panel organizations are partnering with others who have similarly aligned goals. Is there some sort of advertisement, such as newsletters, that they are using to improve communication in their communities, and what are they doing quarterly to make sure they are branching out with as many other groups and organizations out there before the legislative session and pool ideas?

A couple of the panelists shared. For NAMI WA, they actually work with a coalition of different organizations, including Disability Rights WA to look at common legislative goals and support each other's bills, and she has also been meeting with different stakeholders and allies in different organizations to talk about all of our legislative priorities and how we can support one another during session. ODHH partners with AL TSA, their housing division, and DSHS, their housing organization. They have a communication team that they setup to allow for communication, so that any time they're doing a vlog or something, to provide any important information – they used a certified interpreter onscreen and also provide voiceover. There is also captioning. So that is one way they've been trying to improve their publications and what they send out, so that folks know what's going on with them and legislation. They have tried to develop that process for equal access. CEA does something similar to NAMI and ODHH in terms of knowing their relationships but also knowing who may be out of alliance with you and who you need to work on education so that there aren't any surprises when it comes to legislative testimony, and you can be prepared that way. They are starting with Lewis County to help communities and counties have their own legislative forums, instead of just certain counties along the I5 corridor. 33 out of 39 counties in WA are consider rural. So, the disability community in these areas often ends up being told to go solve their own problems and then get back to them, which is a tall order and not fair for the legislature to be consistently asking of folks. So their hope is that by working with each county on that, not specific to employment, and getting to know who the local champions are (schools, advocates, providers, the disability community) and getting them in the same room together working on identifying legislative priorities to educate their local elected officials on is critical. So that is something they're working on.

The panelists were thanked, and hoped that they could join us in the future. There is never enough time to dig in as deeply as we would like to, but we appreciated the time and robust discussion. They were asked to please stay in touch and consider us an ally.

12:00 P.M. Lunch Break (30 mins) – *cut to 28 minutes to keep to time*

12:30 P.M. Subcommittee Updates – *Patricia Bauccio, GCDE Chairperson* (30 mins)

The PowerPoint about subcommittee accomplishments provided in the packet was reviewed.

Accessible Communities: Awarded two grants in the spring funding cycle, created new procedures for reviewing and approving grant proposals, currently reviewing three project proposals (presentation October 26, vote November 16), the new procedures and timeline for reviewing proposals will be implemented for the fall cycle as the method for granting the funding continues to be refined, and they've developed procedures for allocation of funds to counties for reasonable accommodations so that the funds are more equitable and don't take away from grant opportunities. Currently Warren is the chair. He added that the point of the review procedure is to move away from simply voting on proposals at one meeting and instead be able to dig more deeply into the proposals and ask questions ahead of the vote so that proper comparisons and an analysis of the impacts can be conducted (kudos to Megan and Clarence for starting this work). Elaine added that they are currently planning an all-county meeting for December 7th. A question was asked about the website. Elaine shared that we used to have an external website for the program, but have decided to close that and will now be doing a page on the GCDE website, which is currently under development and will include past projects and projects that are currently being funded, etc.

Awards: The ceremony was successfully held in-person on October 21. GCDE received four sponsorships totaling \$7,500 towards the event, received 16 nominations and awarded 8 recipients this year, with 69 registrations for the ceremony in Lynnwood for the first time at the Embassy Suites, and Yvonne and Matt will be the upcoming chairs in 2023.

Community outreach: Follow up was conducted on the commitment statements made at the spring event in Colville, the location of the upcoming winter event was changed from Silverdale to Port Orchard to allow ease of connecting with local government in December which the team is looking forward to exploring, and the plans are currently in process for that event in early December. Damiana added that the last event was completely virtual, but this time, we will be trying a virtual town hall still to allow for expanded

access and safer gathering, but will be attempting to hold the leadership meeting in-person as a breakfast again which is exciting. This will be many of the team members first experience with an in-person outreach meeting since we haven't done one since Feb 2020. Kudos to Marsha who lives in the area and has been doing a lot of groundwork for us.

Legislative workgroup: Continued support of the Nothing About Us Without Us Bill remains a priority. The new lead when Bill goes off the committee at the end of the year will be Kristin. Development of partnerships is also high on the to-do list in networking and building relationships to allow for a stronger voice and impact. Individual members will be encouraged to conduct their own advocacy locally. Upcoming Bill priorities are also being identified. Bill was thanked for his leadership and developing a strong foundation for the group. A communication vehicle for regular communication with partners is also on the wish list, along with creating long range strategic plans, and promoting training for advocates.

Membership: Megan will be the new chair. Six members were selected to serve on the subcommittee. Membership and chairperson positions were publicized. 17 applications interested in GCDE membership were received, and a candidate was successfully recommended for chairperson. Regular membership applications are under review and will interview the finalists. A question was posed on how the process with boards & commissions works. It was shared that GCDE makes a formal recommendation for appointments based upon the review of applications and interviews and taking into consideration various factors related to diversity, but that the final decision stands with the Governor's office of boards & commissions. Another question was posed about how the reappointment process works. It was stated that members ending their first term must fill out an abbreviated application, the part from the boards & commissions office only, and then the membership committee works with boards & commissions again to finalize the appointments. It was asked if the boards & commissions application form could be resent to members whose first terms are ending, and verified that it could. Members should have received a notice saying that they need to reapply, but that typically doesn't go out until fairly late in the year. Historically, interviews have not been conducted by GCDE for reappointment. The only reason we would recommend against a reappointment was if the person hadn't been participating in GCDE, but a conversation with the chairs would happen first to ensure there is a full understanding of the big picture

and a plan could be developed to increase participation or submit resignation. Typically, the process otherwise is fairly automatic unless they've heard otherwise from GCDE, which would be unusual. But the application is necessary. A question was posed about members serving partial terms, and not yet having received the letter about reapplying. In respect for time, any other questions were tabled, but it was noted that Elaine will resend the link.

YLF: The YLF program has been successfully relaunched in person this past summer with a facilitated program for 14 students. The date and location for the 2023 event, starting in late July through the first week of August in Federal way, has been decided. The team is currently working on an accessible marketing video to advertise the program. A youth workgroup was also established to plan future YLF's. Current work includes keeping this year's delegates engaged so as to have a robust applicant pool for peer counselors in 2023. The team really wants to build on student participation and utilize that as a marketing tool to promote the program. A question was posed about when the applications will go out. The target is for December to allow adequate planning time for folks and an effective recruitment. A question was asked about the criteria for youth to aid members in soliciting applicants. It was stated that the team will make sure to share the application with members, and that students have to be involved in the DVR transition program, and that they have to be in high school between the ages of 16-22 as a junior or senior or in a transition program through a college. A question was asked about the promotional video. It was shared that Candace drafted it using photos and videos she took during the event, and is now working with staff to make it more accessible in various ways. Other questions were held in respect for time.

1:00 P.M. **Break** (10 mins) – *shortened to 9 minutes to keep to time*

1:10 P.M. **Youth Panel** – *Elizabeth Gordon, GCDE Executive Director (1 hour)*

It was shared that we have heard from our members several times about how we don't interact much around youth issues, so we thought we'd bring in a panel of experts to talk about some of the work that's being done for youth with disabilities around the state. Panelists were asked first to introduce themselves and their organization.

Panelists:

Tania May, Assistant Superintendent of Public Instruction, OSPI **(TM)**

Tania shared that they are joining the meeting from a conference in Chicago, and are the assistant superintendent at OSPI. As far as background, they have worked in special education for over 25 years at all levels of the school system, including private. They also have a teenage child who is autistic. OSPI stands for the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. They serve as the state educational agency working to support students from preschool to age 22. Specifically, the special education team digs into monitoring, oversight, funding, technical assistance, and support.

Rod Duncan, DDA Employment Program Specialist **(RD)**

Rod shared that he comes from the Developmental Disabilities Administration. They support individuals over the full course of lifespan from birth to death with a variety of services. Personally, he is the community inclusion and transition program manager out of the central office, with a focus on connecting students to employment before they leave school, and were given permission from the legislature to expand the community inclusion program. Their team has taken that on now in addition to transition services over the past year. He has been with DDA for 42 years, starting in the employment program at Fircrest school, and then running a different program, and then moved to field services before moving to a specific employment focus in 2013.

Sam Blazina, Transition Services Program Manager, ESD 105 **(SB)**

Sam thanked everyone for the opportunity to be here and shared that they are the transition program manager with the educational service district 105 which serves parts of Yakima, Kittitas, and Klickitat counties. There are 9 ESD's in the state, and they carry out the duties of being a liaison between the school district activities. They work closely with OSPI and offer a variety of programs that they implement, along with cooperatives with the schools. They help the schools save money while also providing access to services that are developed based upon their needs. They have been in the field of transition for about 26 years and are also the parent of a young adult with an intellectual and developmental disability who exited the school system a few years ago, so they are involved in many different ways. Their background formerly was in public health, but shifted towards

education and advocacy when their son came into their life. They've worked in secondary education running a transition at CWU, and also in the governor's office as the senior education ombuds covering central and eastern WA. They were also with DVR for a couple of years as their regional transition consultant, so have seen this from a number of different lenses.

Melinda Bocci, Transition Manager, DVR **(MB)**

Melinda shared that that are with DVR, and also that they used to be a member of GCDE for two terms, which they loved. Similarly, to Sam, they have just recently transferred to this position. Beforehand, they came from county work with Snohomish County where they worked for 15 years, and before that they worked as a job coach and then a manger and director. So, all in all, they have a lot of transition experience under their belt and are passionate about it. They also still maintain an active benefits planner certification even though that is no longer part of their role at DVR, but in the past have helped a lot of families in helping to understand social security and Medicaid and how that all works together so as not to pose a barrier to employment. Employment is their passion, and they are excited to be in their new role. As far as DVR, it is a statewide resource assisting people with disabilities with all aspects of employment and jobs. Specifically for youth, they work with youth ages 14-24 with disabilities, in transition. They also work with students in pre-employment transition services aged 14-21. These are students who are in special education and have a 504 plan or documented disability. The goal is to help students with employment as they exit out of the school system and transition into an adult world and looking to help make sure people are employed. She shared that she is excited and thankful to be here alongside the other panelists.

Youth Panel questions:

What are the biggest successes you have seen in youth services in the past year?

SB: Sam shared that they can't speak to the program that they're managing with ESD as they've just launched and are still in the process of getting it going with the school districts, but are excited about it, and hope to be able to talk about it a bit more later. However, one of the things they have appreciated during the past year that has been difficult with schools and that they saw during their time at DVR, but amazingly enough has

been something that is positive for students is the whole world of doing things virtually, since this has allowed for some more inclusion than before (even in activities). They have the opportunity to work with IL centers, and with other different programs. At DVR, they oversaw the contracts for the pRE-ETS services, and when they came onboard with the central region, they had about a dozen students being served and the numbers were able to go up to about 5-600 by the time they left as a result of that cooperative and collaboration and partnership with the school districts bringing DVR into the schools. So that was a success, judging by those numbers alone, and anytime you are networking within their communities and with the resources available through the state for increased opportunities.

MB: Melinda feels along the same lines, and that one of DVR's biggest successes has been reopening and getting back out there to work with students, getting into schools, having meetings in-person where possible, and making connections in the community. They are also privileged to be a part of helping create that path again after the pandemic and helping pick up those pieces after everyone went into lock down and are now slowly coming back out and able to access a path to employment. They are also working to identify gaps in all of this that they need to address as people come back in terms of where they can help with employment etc. They too have seen an increase in the number of students they've been serving. They are celebrating those things and hoping to continue on the same track.

RD: Rod shared that DDA has the statewide transition collaborative to include some strong partnerships with DVR and the schools. Two years ago, they started a job foundation project, which brings employment providers into schools and connecting students early, with the goal that students will have jobs before they leave school. Those efforts are really growing, and quickly. They have gone from 20 to 28 counties participating in the pilot, with a few more in various stages of wanting to get onboard. This is exciting. Some students are just in the beginning phases of planning and building infrastructure and partnerships needed for success. But it is moving well and an exciting project. Also, last session the department was directed to create statewide school to work, which is a program they've been participating in for a while, but was not widespread because counties had to be able to support it. Now it will be developed from a 'no student left behind' mindset with a focus on transition services overall. OSPI and DVR are involved as well. It will be a 3-year project started last year, between connecting to students, job foundation, and job development.

TM: Tania agreed with everything her fellow panelists contributed. She shared a link in the chat to the transition collaborative summit reports, the recommendations of which you can see throughout the final SSB 5790. It is exciting since it was such a community lift that had lots of support. It will be data driven, about the knowledge and needs of students, and what happens when they have the right supports like school to work. They are celebrating employment, championing transition, and are excited and honored to be involved in working with and learning from all of the partners here today. They are privileged to now be involved in closing some of the gaps they noticed as a teacher and be a bridge to help break down barriers as a part of this work.

What are the biggest challenges you are facing?

RD: The biggest challenge is the workforce shortage out there to provide the level of support that they want. Not only for transition services, but for the employment and community inclusion field overall. It's disheartening when clients have to accept jobs for less hours than they want because there just aren't staff available to be able to support them at the level they want to be and need, so that's a significant challenge to services right now.

MB: Increasing the knowledge and access to DVR services remains a challenge and making sure that postsecondary training is an option for students who need more education and knowing what their options are with vocational rehabilitation services and understanding the program and all of the different pieces involved. Supporting schools, transition teachers, paraeducators, and staff who are helping the students move along in understanding that as well. Regarding SB 5790, going out into the counties and making it work together with pre-existing systems to the benefit of students exiting school with a job will be a challenge. So as much as it is exciting and a success, it's a challenge as well, and one that spans the partners here on this panel today. The need to figure out what this looks like for the state and connecting throughout the state, including rural areas. To get the conversation going and ensure people understand expectations, and that they have the resources, timeline, and assistance to be successful. Everyone will have to come together to make it work, which is exciting and challenge all at once, which is a fun puzzle to solve.

TM: Transition and graduation, as this group understands, that the work doesn't end there. Inclusion and transition really need to be lifelong activities. There isn't an age you get to where suddenly this isn't something

you have to worry about anymore. It has been a journey. In 2018, WA ranked 44th out of 50 states in terms of students with disabilities accessing general education. We're making progress there, but there are also some growing pains, and not everyone is experiencing change at the same rate or afforded the same opportunities. If students are segregated throughout their education, how are they going to move into competitive integrated employment? There's a disconnect there. The same goes for thinking about transition programs. We've been trying to move away from that word. It should be about services, and not only for a certain category of students. Any student with a disability should have access to transition services if it would benefit them. The sense of learning and belonging is front of mind. She'll know we've gotten there when every student and family in our schools know that they are needed and loved by the community because we can both teach and learn from one another, which is the hope.

SB: Would like to thank and echo what fellow panelists have said. It is different and there is indeed a disconnect. From a broader state perspective to more of a regional one, sometimes areas can tend to get overlooked because they don't have the funds or resources to support these programs on their own. They have been involved in conversations with partners about what needs to be done to improve services for their local students. To give folks an idea, for the upcoming graduating years, there are 101 students with I/DD that will be exiting the school system, and only 39 of those are on DD waivers. So, there's a lot of work to do. The goal is to really link with partners and connect all of the pieces and be a liaison and model to others in the community. They know that they're not going to be able to serve all of the students that need to be served right now, but with the LINK, Learning, inclusion, network, and knowledge, it's designed to meet the needs of students as they embark on their journey of independence from school. Students with I/DD ages 18-21 to integrate in the communities and be able to choose their pathway to adulthood. We want to grow that and get that support to do so. Everyone is a life and an individual who can be impacted by these services and programs. There are a lot of decisions made that they're impacted by. So, they need to coordinate better and not be in silos.

Looking ahead to the upcoming legislative session, do you have any priorities we should be aware of? Anything on the horizon for youth with disabilities?

MB: Really wanted to dive into SB 5790 because there's going to be a continuation of the work that's going to come around it. The other panelists have talked about this as well. DVR was awarded the money to go forward to get jobs for students and making it an option for students across the state to get everybody employed, not just those counties that had already been participating in school to work. Looking at what's going on with those other 32 counties and working on all of the pieces to make that happen, just continuing to watch that and keeping it on the radar and ensure it stays a priority and report back about what's come of it. The conversations around it have been wonderful so far, even in rural areas of the state that folks don't necessarily know about or how to pronounce the names of. Getting out there and seeing what's going on in rural counties, what's going on with tribes, and realizing that there are some pretty negative trends going on in terms of people not getting connected. People aren't talking. They're getting confused by roles and when and where to do things. But things are happening, there's a lot of incredible work being done and finding those and making sure that it can all come together, and people can move forward in bringing the systems together, with schools, DDA, DVR, employment agencies, and counties and everyone who is doing this work around one another. Do people know about this, let's spread the word and use best practice moving forward to help others who might not be aware. It's a great time to be a part of all of this. We are gathering information, we have data about the students and their needs from the past year, and can use it moving forward in collaboration and conversation from the folks that need to be involved, including those who may currently be missing. The hope is that with increased discussions, and meetings, more students will come out of the woodwork who can access these services and the numbers and data will follow and increase because more students will be found through all of the efforts which will be incredible to see folks getting employed. So that's the hope that the different pieces and collaboration will be happening and creating that statewide council to oversee everything and make sure that there's an equitable approach and that the programs and services are brought to the folks that may not have had them before.

TM: Recently there has been conversation around the fact that special education funding in WA has a cap. The school districts receive funds for every student. They have a basic education allocation, which includes students with disabilities. The students served in special education who

have an individual education plan, the district receives a multiplier for that, extra funds to support programming. Districts have a federal obligation to find and serve every such student in their system. So, there's a gap there. They need to find and serve however many there are. But they only receive funding for 13.5% of their population. The superintendent recently asked to run some numbers and look at what would happen if we removed the cap? What they found was that districts are overspending by \$400M a year for special education. They're already doing that. To serve these students, they spend \$400M more annually than they receive, both in federal and state funds. Removing the cap would increase money to districts in the amount of \$65M, so it's not going to close that cap. It's an incredible time here in WA because there is so much support across the board, from advocates, from students and families, from schools, and also from leadership. So, the superintendent said, let's do it, let's remove the cap. She shared in the chat a link to their request to the legislature to fully fund special education, and they are also now beginning to think of transition as lifelong. Not only are they asking to remove the cap, but they're also requesting an increase in the multiplier all the way from pre-K to age 21. And there are supports built into that for our schools, including continued funding for inclusion practices and projects. It can be framed as less an increase to special education and more just closing that gap. It's already funds that are being spent, and the districts are having to use local funds, which isn't always possible in some counties. Sometimes there isn't those funds for enrichment, transportation, sports, and mental health supports as well. So, if there's support from the state to cover the basic cost of special education, then it frees up those local funds for a whole host of activities that are going to benefit the students and the community.

SB: Sam agreed with Tania and believes that we can't really individualize a systemic support for a student without taking geographical areas into consideration as well. This is something that's frequently missed, especially in areas outside of the I5 corridor, or even eastern WA, those folks don't represent central WA. So, this is something that needs to be addressed when looking at statewide issues, and how that impacts individual students with a documented disability. What are the regional struggles, the barriers, and things that are needed to be accessed? How does that work in small rural communities with limited employment options? How does it work when there isn't the transportation infrastructure? These are things that need to be rethought, and aren't unique to certain locations.

They exist throughout the state. People in these small communities are connected with each other, they know the resources that exist, but oftentimes, it isn't enough. That support doesn't continue on. There isn't that communication and team of service providers to work with you during that transition period in a lot of places right now. So, these programs need to be tailored to those specific areas.

RD: The greatest thing about this, to respond to Sam's comment, is that it can be individualized, and it's also the worst thing. Because it is really challenging. But the exiting thing is that we all agree on that common goal that we're trying to achieve for students. It's going to look different across the state, but as long as we're all on the same path and headed in the same direction, we aren't going to give up. We're going to stay the course and continue on somehow to get there. We aren't going to lose sight of what we're trying to achieve for that individual. Even though it's going to be different regardless of where you are, it's about trying to build that team and network of support around the individual and focus on that person to try to get there. As we heard earlier, DDA was also directed to do a rate study for employment and community inclusion services, which was done and completed and posted and forwarded on. They are hopeful that will be supported in the next legislative session. It will be critical to help address that workforce shortage that's been mentioned earlier. We aren't going to be able to do any of this if we don't have the staff to make it happen. But we absolutely do have the resources.

Questions from our group.....

A question was posed about whether the workforce shortage across the state in all levels of employment is opening up opportunities for the students or limiting them as far as employment?

RD: Said that we're in an ironic position in terms of having the best opportunities in getting jobs for students. However, they are having to turn them down or only partially access them because there isn't the job coach support or availability of employment providers needed, which is unfortunate.

MB: Thanked for the question, said that even in moving forward with SB 5790, working with communities across the state that may be new to statewide school to work, how is that going to affect the capacity of employment agencies, DVR, DDA, and the schools? That also needs to be

part of the conversation. There are job opportunities out there for students, but job coaching, and employment agencies are struggling to hire and keep staff, there are a lot of new teachers or insufficient amounts of teachers in place, or new DDA case managers. Hopefully all of their efforts will fill the gaps that they're seeing right now.

RD: A positive thing is that employers are stepping up to provide natural supports, because they need people, so that is hopeful.

SB: And this is an important piece. Sometimes employers lack awareness of what it looks like to employ someone with a disability, especially in the rural areas. So, sometimes, you have to work to find those employers that are ready and willing to bring them in. Creating that list of employers who are friendly and welcoming and open to doing that so that the students can experience a variety of different sectors of employment. It is just something that is going to take the time to go into employers, talking and collaborating with them. It's doable, but it will take time to get to where it needs to be.

Another question was posed about if there is anything we can do to help partner with and get the message out about these programs as a part of a stronger voice.

TM: One opportunity would be through the transition collaborative. Some members of this committee serve on that collaborative, me included. I can support with regular updates and cross collaboration. Also in the chat is an upcoming statewide opportunity where we'll be listening to partners in transition across the state as a part of this transition council and figuring out how that should look and how can we define it together in a way to ensure we have the complete spectrum of voices, so you'd be welcome to join that as well.

SB: In the Yakima area, we are working with partners in our area to put together the first annual symposium with panelists from different areas of the state, and I can provide information if this group would like to attend and provide representation in our area. We're calling it the "Before, During, and After" of what transition looks like. And it will be an opportunity for members to meet community, and to hear what's happening, which is exciting, and something that maybe could be utilized.

RD: I want to add that if you're hearing stories, hearing concerns, stay connected and bring them to us. We don't know what we don't know. We

want to own our work and not make justifications for or rationalize them. We want to hear what the problems are so we can address them. We can't address frustrations that we don't know about.

MB: Let us know who we're missing in all of these efforts, who needs to be a part of the conversation. Who haven't we talked to yet that we should be talking to? In looking at the horizon of what we're doing with youth with disabilities, we're trying to expand the transition programs so people have a better understanding of what DVR is, and what services are available to students and spreading that to communities as well. We're trying to improve our processes around referrals and all those sorts of things, and making sure statewide partners know what those processes are to get resources to students. Just continuing to share that. I think you'll see that more and more. In my 20+ years in the field, this is the first time in my profession that I've seen such incredible energy around a statewide effort of systems coming together. It's a very exciting time and I think we're only going to see more collaboration. Keep talking and sharing and staying connected. The energy is here.

RD: I concur, this is the first time in my 42 years I've seen that commitment from all the partners to move in the same direction. It's hard to get the message all the way down to the different levels, you know, we are getting some push back a bit in terms of why I would work with them, they've never done it, they've always been a challenge, they're just too hard to work with etc. That's old news, let go of it. We're all here, we're committed, and we're going to make it happen.

MB: Getting the message out there is the thing too. In talking to people across the state I've heard a lot of negative, "oh, you know, we've tried this. We don't want to do it again," so just trying to put that positive spin on things and encourage folks that there's a lot of systems working on this together and a lot of things are happening.

A follow up question was asked about how often we should be reaching out to connect.

TM: We're currently in a bit of a transition period with the transition collaborative, onboarding new staff, thinking about how we're going to work together to implement 5790. So as a first step right now, if the committee would like to have this as a standing item just briefly, I'd be happy to give updates and work with the partners on this panel to do so.

A question was posed about what is being done about the transportation issue and getting people to work, particularly in rural areas.

RD: This is one of the major barriers and we're aware of that. We just came back from a conference earlier this month and are hearing other states come up with creative ways to address transportation issues. So, we're working with our partners nationally to figure out what other states are doing, how are they helping within their waiver programs to assist with transportation. It's still at the seed level because historically we haven't gotten much support in moving that direction, but now that we've seen that other states have been more successful with this, we're going to have to ride on their coattails to ask how they made this happen because obviously the need is definitely there.

SB: This is an ongoing issue in our area here, and there have been a lot of conversation and small efforts met with resistance to provide transportation, so I'm with you on that. Unfortunately, I can't tell you that I see the light at the end of the tunnel at this juncture. I think there's a lot of work that needs to be done to better understand what those limitations are. So, folks that have the potential to help us will be on board as opposed to bring up barriers in creating transportation opportunities.

TM: I concur. It has not been a standalone recommendation in the transition collaborative report for example. It certainly comes up often as a need. And from the school system perspective, I can share things that local communities have tried to do. We get request sometimes from transition services to purchase a van for example. So, some communities have tried to work within that. I don't know that that's a widescale solution and so it does feel a bit piecemeal, but when they're staff opportunity, and it makes sense to do that in a local community.

MB: It's definitely something that's at the top of the list as I'm reaching out to counties, especially rural ones. So, I echo everyone and what they're saying. It's definitely a need. It's promising to know that things are happening in other states and they're making it happen, especially states that are kind of similar to us in terms of size, ruralness and accessibility. It's going to be a continued conversation and barrier that needs to be addressed.

A comment was made about the fact that our membership, as it's representative of so many different counties, might consider talking to our

counties and connecting with these folks if students aren't getting the support they need after they exit school system since it's going to take a specialized approach in each community based upon the resources it has, especially if it's one that doesn't have a lot happening right now. It's exciting to watch this program and think about 5 years from now what type of difference we'll have in our state for students exiting the school system. It's going to have a really big impact.

A comment was made about the need to utilize the statewide IL centers further as a resource that hasn't been tapped into yet. There is a very robust network available, and they are federally mandated to provide transition services to youth and young adults. But I applaud the work that's being done, and the partnerships being established to get this type of programming off and running. Please make us part of the discussion. I'd highly encourage that there's some exploration of that resource because we all have the same goals.

SB: I have an IL background and used to be a benefits planner. We're very connected with them here in our region and they're a part of our transition network. They'll be a part of our link program bringing all of these agencies in to make sure the students are maximizing all of their access and resources, so thank you, because the IL centers are awesome, and we truly utilize them here.

A comment was made from an individual who has a number of years in higher education, and their frustration of not being able to work with DVR or Ticket to Work. Having to go out of their way to work with students with disabilities to find employment because they weren't getting the resources. IEPs didn't include transitions services to higher education, specifically to vocational schools, where you get a short amount of training and get a livable wage in a short period of time without major student loans or big costs to any agencies or Pell grants. So, that was a concern, and back in the day when they worked with a former contact at OSPI, they agreed about that. It needs to be a part of the picture. Even working with ESD offices locally, I don't understand why I couldn't refer a student with disabilities to DVR. I had all of the documentation, everything in place. All they had to do was buy in, help out. The training was almost complete, but help was needed for employment. They always said that you're serving the most severely disabled and can't take anyone with an orthopedic condition, which a lot of them were, LNI type of students. Just throwing that out and

would like to offer my expertise to help make changes to this transition from K12 to higher ed to employment.

The participant was thanked for their comment, and the panelists were thanked for their contributions and asked to consider us a partner.

2:10 P.M. Break (10 mins) – shortened to 8 minutes to keep to time

2:20 P.M. Recognition of outgoing members —Warren Weissman, GCDE Co-Vice Chair (20 mins) – Warren shared that we would have three people going off the committee, in addition to Pat, that we want to recognize. Bill Kinyon, Larry Gorton, and Reg George. Reg couldn't join us today, so we will start with Bill and Larry. A physical acknowledgement of your time on the committee has already been mailed to you each, which you should receive shortly, if you haven't already. But we wanted to take a moment to virtually acknowledge you all since we can't be in the same room.

Starting with Bill. Bill is leaving after completing his second term, and has been with us for six years. Warren has overlapped with Bill for 5 of those 6 years, and has gotten to know him pretty well, having been involved in a lot of the same subcommittees and activities. Probably the biggest thing Bill deserves thanks for is getting our legislative workgroup going. He's also been actively involved in the Community Outreach and will be attending the December event as sort of a last hurrah with GCDE before remaining an informal member going forward. To give Bill a bit of a hard time, he has always been an active user of the raise hand feature, shall we say. He's always got something to say about pretty much every topic. But in my experience, Bill's comments come with a lot of passion and thought, which is great. And he has a lot of experience with the disability community, so his comments always reflect that. All of this to say, Bill, that we'll miss you on the committee and hope you'll remain involved in the future.

Next is Larry. Larry has been with us for three years but has decided not to seek a second term. I've also gotten to know Larry pretty well both on community outreach and accessible communities. A couple of things about Larry, aside from always being there and participating very actively in committee meetings, a couple other things come to mind about Larry. He has been a representative of the deaf community and is always reminding us of how the various things that we say and do relate to that community. The other thing is he has been a representative of eastern WA bringing that perspective, which can sometimes be missing. So, that is something we've appreciated as well. We'll miss that as well.

Finally, we have Reg. Reg isn't with us today, but it's worth mentioning that he has also been an active participant in many regards. He attended the in-person YLF recently, and is also going to be a part of the upcoming outreach team. Reg has never been shy about

voicing his thoughts, in particular with regards to election related issues, and how the lack of access for people with low vision or who are blind is important to remember. He has also always used his expertise with technical issues to make comments about a variety of things we've been considering, such as hybrid meetings, or various other things. So, we appreciate his comments and contributions as well. Bill and Larry were given the opportunity to say a few words.

They were both honored to have been a part of the GCDE in various capacities. It gave them the opportunity to work alongside great people on meaningful efforts and to learn a lot. They hope to remain involved and continue as advocates and thanked the GCDE. They also plan to take advantage of other opportunities to share their expertise and improve the quality of life for people with disabilities and are grateful for this one. Everyone received their recognition items.

A moment was taken to recognize Pat for her passion and heart for the work that we do. Pat has been so heavily involved in all of our pursuits. She has led in many different roles over the years. Her impact on people has likely been in the hundreds. She follows up with and keeps up on so many people who have been involved in the past and remains connected. She has such a legacy with GCDE and has given a depth of understanding to the values, commitments, history, and culture that we hold. We are so glad that she will remain connected as an emeritus chair. She has been such an asset to us, and we so appreciate her input and mentorship, and Pat as a person. She isn't going to get away very easily. So, please move forward with closing the meeting, but we couldn't do so without first recognizing you. You are amazing and will be so missed as chair, but we can't wait to work alongside you in advocacy for many, many more years.

2:30 P.M. Wrap-up, reflections and next steps – Patricia Bauccio, GCDE Chairperson (30 mins) *Pat thanked everyone for their kind words that brought a tear to her eye and left her speechless. The subcommittees over the years have meant a lot to her, and to see the evolutions. The seeds we have planted together have been widespread, and the collective wealth of our knowledge pulling together for advocacy. We've taught and learned from one another. We've not been able to get together these past few years, which has been hard. But we appreciate all of you and want you to continue to develop and share your passion and excitement about GCDE. There have been so many inspirational people who have been a part of this group over the years. And I want you all to know that we have the power to take GCDE to the next level, and I see it happening. We will see that growth. The more participation and involvement, the better it will be. It's on us to make this what we want it to be. None of us can do it on our own. Keep contributing to the processes and projects. Now to move on to wrapping up and next steps before public comment.*

Next steps as I have captured them are that Elaine is going to send the link to the boards and commissions application to members whose terms are up for reappointment. The survey for member at large nominations will go out after checking with folks who have been nominated. Those who asked for the panel contact or information will receive it. YLF leadership will follow up with those who had questions not able to be addressed. The applications for YLF will also be sent out to members for distribution when ready.

3:00 P.M. Public Comment Period (10 mins) – no comments heard. It was noted that comments could also be submitted in writing if desired.

In lieu of public comment, a member expressed that they hoped we could get some more eastern WA representation on the committee to replace those who are leaving.

A birthday was noted.

It was noted that we should increase our focus on transportation issues if possible.

We'd also like to see more multimedia branding used as a marketing tool.

The outgoing members were recognized and thanked once more, along with the new subcommittee chairs. Please don't hesitate to reach out for help if needed. We won't be far.

Our panelists were also thanked once more.

Keep up the passion and activities until we see you all again in January. Goodbye, all.

3:10 P.M. Meeting is adjourned

Next General Membership Meeting will be on January 6, 2023