

**Children’s Cabinet Meeting**

**Unapproved Minutes**

**April 19, 2022**

**Member/Representative Name: Attendees**

Department of Children and Family Services - Secretary Marketa Garner Walters

Ellyn Toney, representing Office of Juvenile Justice Deputy Secretary William “Bill” Sommers

Susan East Nelson, chair of Children’s Cabinet Advisory Board

Joni Landry, representing Superintendent of Education, Dr. Cade Brumley

Renita Williams, representing Louisiana Workforce Commission Secretary Ava Cates

Mark Thomas, representing Department of Health Secretary Dr. Courtney Phillips

**Special Guests**

 Gov. Edwards

Dr. Chaunda Mitchell

Katina Semien

Brett Brunson

Dr. Michelle Fazio Brunson

Dr. Christy Hornsby

Levar Robinson

**Staff:**

Dr. Melanie Washington, Children’s Cabinet Executive Director

Michele Rabalais, Louisiana Children’s Trust Fund/Children’s Cabinet Executive Assistant

**Call to Order**:

Dr. Melanie Washington, Executive Director, called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. and introductions were made.

**Roll Call:**

Michele M. Rabalais, Executive Assistant, called roll.

**Welcome and Opening Remarks:** Gov. Edwards provided the opening remarks.

Gov. Edwards reported that the First Lady recently was involved in a Human Trafficking Prevention Event that was held in New Orleans, Louisiana that coincided with the Final Four tournament. This was the largest group of Governor’s and First Spouses at one event.

The public health emergency expired on March 16, 2022 and was not renewed. In addition Governor Edwards reported that the number of cases is increasing due to the new Omicron variant but hospitalizations are not increasing.

The 2022 legislative session has begun and will last three months. Gov. Edwards reported that the state is in a good place in terms of our ability to make good strategic investments with one time funds and recurring expenditures as well as a large surplus from last year. The Revenue Estimating Conference (REC) will meet May 6th and the Governor expects it to recognize even more revenue. This will allow the state to make some key investments in infrastructure and early childhood education. Early childhood funding will go toward increasing the number of slots available as well as better funding those slots to make sure that we can attract and retain top quality teachers. Increased funding is also available for higher education including faculty raises as well as funding for the mandated cost increases in higher education and specific programs that are targeting work force needs. K-12 raises have also been budgeted for teachers, support staff etc.

In addition Governor Edwards stated that Louisiana had one of the highest percentages of in-person instruction during the pandemic.

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month. The Governor informed Children’s Cabinet Members that the First Annual Child Abuse Prevention Conference will be held April 21, 2022.

**Approval Minutes**:

Secretary Marketa Walters made a motion to approve the February 2, 2022 minutes as presented. Susan East Nelson seconded the motion. All approved. Motion carried.

**Cradle to College Pipeline Presentation:** Brett Brunson, Dr. Michelle Fazio Brunson and Dr. Christy Hornsby presented information on the Cradle to College Pipeline.

They discussed the Northwestern State University Early Childhood Education and Natchitoches District Defender’s Office service-learning project to remap the Cradle to Prison Pipeline to a Cradle to College Pipeline in Louisiana. Mr. Brunson outlined his efforts to reduce incarceration and recidivism rates in Louisiana, while Dr. Michelle Fazio-Brunson and Dr. Christy Hornsby described strategies for providing intervention and support for young children growing up in poverty to boost children’s literacy skills.

The Cradle to College project is an initiative that focuses on remapping the Cradle to Prison pipeline to a Cradle to College pipeline by providing early literacy resources and familial support to local children. Discussion followed.

**Fathers on a Mission:** Levar Robinson presented information on Fathers On A Mission (F.O.A.M.). FOAM promotes responsible, committed fatherhood through education, strong relationships, holistic health, and socioeconomic improvement opportunities to empower fathers, father figures and youth to positively impact and influence communities. F.O.A.M's goal is to support fathers to become self-aware and self-sufficient in supporting their families. Discussion followed.

**Louisiana Children’s Trust Fund (LCTF) Contract Approval Request:** Katina Semien, LCTF Executive Director, presented the LCTF grant review recommendations for FY 23. Ms. Semien informed the Children’s Cabinet members that for the first time the LCTF grant application and review process was 100% on-line. A copy of the recommendations was distributed to the Children’s Cabinet. LCTF is recommending approximately $1.4 million dollars in funding to 61 programs across the state as well as 8 statewide events/conferences.

Contracts will be funded through money received from duplicate birth certificates, Community Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) grant as well as funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Discussion followed.

**LCTF Contract Vote:** Susan East Nelson made a motion to approve the LCTF grant review recommendations as presented. Secretary Marketa Walters seconded the motion. All approved. Motion carried.

**Other Business:** The 2021 Children’s Cabinet Annual Report was distributed to all Children’s Cabinet Members.

**Public Comments:** Renee Antoine, Director, Women’s Policy, reported that last week was Black Maternal Health Week at the Capitol. A proclamation was signed stating that each year in April there will be a Black Maternal Health Week. Black Maternal Health Advocacy Day was held on April 13 to bring statewide attention to the maternal health crisis disproportionately impacting Black birthing people and families and shares policy solutions available this legislative session.

Susan East Nelson reported that on March 15th the Louisiana Partnership celebrated the Children’s Day at the Capitol.

**Adjournment:** Mark Thomas made a motion to adjourn. Susan East Nelson seconded the motion. All approved. Meeting adjourned.