

House Committee on Appropriations

Minutes of Meeting
2021 Regular Session
April 13, 2021

I. CALL TO ORDER

Representative Jerome "Zee" Zeringue, chairman of the House Committee on Appropriations, called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. in Room 5, in the state capitol in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The committee administrative assistant called the roll.

II. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Representative Jerome "Zee" Zeringue, chairman
Representative Roy Daryl Adams
Representative Tony Bacala
Representative R. Dewith Carrier
Representative Gary M. Carter, Jr., vice chairman
Representative Raymond J. Crews
Representative Daryl Andrew Deshotel
Representative Mary DuBuisson
Representative Rick Edmonds
Representative Aimee Adatto Freeman
Representative Lance Harris
Representative John R. Illg, Jr.
Representative Frederick Douglass Jones
Representative Timothy P. Kerner
Representative Rodney Lyons
Representative Tanner D. Magee
Representative C. Denise Marcelle
Representative Jack G. McFarland
Representative Dustin Miller
Representative Troy D. Romero
Representative Christopher Turner
Representative William "Bill" Wheat, Jr.

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Representative Barbara W. Carpenter
Representative Blake Miguez
Representative Francis C. Thompson

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ms. Katie Andress, committee administrative assistant
Ms. Stephanie Little, attorney
Ms. Amanda Trapp, legislative analyst

ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES PRESENT:

Ms. Faye Talbot, sergeant at arms

III. DISCUSSION**House Bill No. 1 by Representative Zeringue**

The following agencies contained in House Bill No. 1 were presented and discussed:

Department of Children and Family Services

Ms. Maggie Higgins, budget analyst, House Fiscal Division (HFD), 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-2441, and Mr. Chas Nichols, budget analyst, HFD, 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-2444, presented an overview and discussed the department's FY 21-22 budget.

Ms. Marketa Garner Walters, secretary, Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), 627 North Fourth Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-6940, presented and discussed a handout, Exhibit A, which is included in the committee records.

Dr. Eric Horent, undersecretary, DCFS, 627 North Fourth Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-1102, and Mr. Nichols discussed trends in certain programs within the department with Representative Zeringue.

Secretary Walters and Dr. Horent discussed the department's efforts to prevent fraud within the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) with Representative Zeringue.

Dr. Horent discussed the administrative costs associated with foster care and adoptions with Representative Edmonds. Secretary Walters and Dr. Horent also discussed foster care parent board rate averages with Representatives Zeringue and Edmonds.

Secretary Walters and Dr. Horent discussed employee compensation rates and vacant positions within the foster care program with Representative Carter.

Dr. Horent and Ms. Shavana Howard, assistant secretary, DCFS, 627 North Fourth Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 400-3311, discussed the number of SNAP recipients in Louisiana with Representative Carter.

Secretary Walters discussed the department's efforts to improve and implement processes for emergency SNAP benefits with Representative Illg.

Dr. Horent discussed the amount of appropriated funds from the department's statutory dedications with Representative Illg. Secretary Walters also discussed funding for foster care youth entering college with Representative Illg.

Secretary Walters discussed the decrease in child abuse investigations due to the COVID-19 pandemic with Representative Wheat.

Ms. Howard discussed the use of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds to create programs to aid the state's fatherhood initiative Representative Crews.

Secretary Walters and Dr. Horent discussed the department's funded Table of Organization (T.O.) positions and the increased number of SNAP recipients in the state with Representative Bacala.

Ms. Howard discussed certain SNAP eligibility waivers due to the COVID-19 pandemic with Representative Bacala.

Health Care Services Division

Mr. Nichols presented an overview and discussed the FY 21-22 budget for the Health Care Services Division.

Dr. Wayne Wilbright, chief medical informatics officer, Ms. Lanette Buie, chief operations officer, Health Care Services Division (HCSD), 5429 Airline Highway, Baton Rouge, LA 70805, (225) 354-7000, and Mr. Nichols discussed the division's legacy costs after Hurricane Katrina with Representative Edmonds.

Ms. Buie discussed the increased cost of risk management premiums with Representative Bacala.

Representative Miller took a personal privilege to acknowledge members of the Louisiana chapter of the Boys & Girls Club.

Louisiana Department of Health

Mr. Nichols presented an overview and discussed the department's FY 21-22 budget.

Dr. Courtney Phillips, secretary, Louisiana Department of Health (LDH), 628 North Fourth Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-9509, discussed core service statistics for the state's human services districts and authorities with Representatives Zeringue and Miller.

Mr. Mark Thomas, deputy secretary, LDH, 628 North Fourth Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-9509, and Mr. Nichols discussed budget reductions to the human services districts and authorities with Representative Zeringue.

Dr. Phillips and Mr. Thomas discussed a possible funding methodology to reallocate funding to human services districts and authorities based on population with Representative Zeringue.

Representative Turner made a request for the department to look into making the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program more retail friendly.

Dr. Phillips provided an update regarding the request for proposal for the new managed care organization (MCO) contracts with Representative Turner.

Ms. Karen Stubbs, assistant secretary, Office of Behavioral Health (OBH), 628 North Fourth Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-9509, discussed the discrepancy between federal funding for mental health and substance abuse prevention with Representative DuBuisson.

Ms. Ruth Johnson, undersecretary, LDH, 628 North Fourth Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-9509, and Mr. Nichols discussed the difference between the Provider Relief Fund and the Coronavirus Relief Fund with Representative DuBuisson.

Mr. Thomas discussed the necessary approvals to implement an updated funding methodology for the state's human services districts and authorities with Representative Zeringue.

Representative Carter in the chair.

Dr. Phillips, Ms. Jennifer Katzman, staff advisor, and Ms. Tara LeBlanc, interim Medicaid director, LDH, 628 North Fourth Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-9509, discussed the cost for dental services for developmentally disabled adults in relationship to House Bill No. 172 of the 2021 Regular Session with Representative Kerner.

Representative Zeringue in the chair.

Mr. Nichols provided a breakdown of the net reductions of T.O. positions within the Medicaid Program with Representative Zeringue.

Mr. Nichols and Mr. J. Travis McIlwain, director, Office of Planning and Budget, 1201 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-7005, discussed the effects of growing the Medical Assistance Trust Fund (MATF) funds in subsequent fiscal years with Representatives Zeringue, Bacala, and Harris.

Representative Edmonds briefed the committee regarding the accomplishments of the Joint Medicaid Oversight Committee and took a personal privilege to acknowledge Ms. Johnson's work with the committee.

Mr. Nichols discussed changes to the department's interagency transfers with Representative Marcelle.

Mr. McIlwain discussed the amount of funding for employee market rate adjustments with Representative Marcelle.

Dr. Phillips discussed the number of COVID-19 vaccinations administered, access to vaccinations, and COVID-19 tests conducted since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic with Representative Marcelle.

Dr. Phillips addressed the committee regarding the department's efforts to curb the spread of COVID-19 and upcoming initiatives LDH plans to incorporate in the upcoming fiscal year.

Mr. Nichols and Ms. Johnson discussed the impact of enhanced Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) rates on the Medicaid Program due to the COVID-19 pandemic with Representative Bacala.

Mr. Nichols, Dr. Phillips, and Ms. Kim Hood, assistant secretary, Office of Public Health, 628 North Fourth Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-9509, discussed the amount of funds expended for COVID-19 testing and ways to expand testing throughout the state with Representative Miller.

Dr. Phillips also discussed the development of processes to review compensation rates for certain healthcare providers with Representative Miller.

Dr. Phillips and Ms. Johnson discussed the amount expended on services to the Medicaid expansion population and the state's health outcomes as a result of Medicaid expansion with Representative Carter.

Ms. Lisa English, executive director, Jefferson Parish Human Services Authority, 628 North Fourth Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-9509, and Mr. Nichols discussed the results of a reduction in services due to the COVID-19 pandemic with Representative Illg.

Mr. Daniel Cocran, Medicaid deputy director, LDH, 628 North Fourth Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-9509, discussed pharmaceutical rebates with Representative Illg.

Representative Zeringue requested from Dr. Phillips the cost associated with providing dental services for Medicaid eligible children.

Ms. Johnson and Dr. Phillips discussed the department's request for additional funding and T.O. positions for certain auditing and professional services for the Medicaid Program with Representative Zeringue.

Mr. Michael Boutte, Medicaid deputy director, Mr. Steve Russo, executive counsel, LDH, 628 North Fourth Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-9509, and Dr. Phillips discussed the department's processes to review and audit provider claims with Representative Zeringue.

Mr. Russo discussed Medicaid's pharmaceutical rebate process and Medicaid's preferred drug list with Representative Bacala.

Representative Bacala called attention to certain language regarding MATF in Section 19 of House Bill No. 1.

Dr. Phillips and Mr. Russo discussed funding for the department's Medicaid Program Integrity Unit, and the use of data analytics to prevent fraud, waste and abuse within the Medicaid Program with Representative McFarland.

IV. BUSINESS

There was no other business.

V. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Persons who do not feel comfortable giving testimony in person at this time may submit a prepared statement in accordance with House Rule 14.33 in lieu of appearing before the committee:

A. Any interested person or any committee member may file with the committee a prepared statement concerning a specific instrument or matter under consideration by the committee or concerning any matter within the committee's scope of authority, and the committee records shall reflect receipt of such statement and the date and time thereof.

B. Any person who files a prepared statement which contains data or statistical information shall include in such prepared statement sufficient information to identify the source of the data or statistical information.

For the purposes of this Paragraph, the term "source" shall mean a publication, website, person, or other source from which the data or statistical information contained in the prepared statement was obtained by the person or persons who prepared the statement.

NOTE: Only statements mailed to h-app@legis.la.gov and received prior to noon on Monday, April 12th, will be included in the record for this committee meeting.

All persons desiring to participate in the meeting shall utilize appropriate protective health measures and observe the recommended and appropriate social distancing.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Representative Wheat offered a motion to adjourn. Without objection, the motion passed by a vote of 18 yeas and 0 nays. Representatives Zeringue, Adams, Bacala, Carrier, Carter, DuBuisson, Edmonds, Freeman, Harris, Illg, Jones, Kerner, Lyons, McFarland, Dustin Miller, Romero, Turner, and Wheat voted yea.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chairman Jerome "Zee" Zeringue
House Committee on Appropriations