

UNOFFICIAL

**MINUTES
ARKANSAS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
April 20, 2021**

The Arkansas Workforce Development Board convened the Full Board meeting through electronic means on April 20, 2021, beginning at 10:04 a.m. The meeting was conducted remotely utilizing Zoom and teleconference. Chair Tom Anderson presided with the following members voicing their presence: Mr. Carl Daughtery proxy for Mr. Joseph Baxter, Mr. Len Blaylock III, Ms. Karen Breashears, Mr. Scott Bull, Dr. Charisse Childers, Judge Brandon Ellison, Mr. Randy Finegan, Mr. Jeff Griffin, Ms. Abby Houseworth, Mr. Alan Hughes, Ms. Rebecca Ives, Ms. Candice Lawrence, Ms. Holley Little, Ms. Alisha Lewis proxy for Dr. Maria Markham, Mr. Brian Marsh, Dr. Trenia Miles, Mr. George “Gan” Nunnally, Mr. Justin Major proxy for Secretary Mike Preston, Dr. Julie Roberson, Mr. Kelley Sharp, Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes, Mr. Robert Thorne, and Dr. Diana Wright.

Mr. Lindsay Brown, Ms. Melissa Hanesworth, Mr. Randy Henderson, Mr. Charles Johnson, Mr. Johnny Key, and Mayor James Sanders were unable to attend.

Chairman’s Opening Comments: Chair Anderson called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m. upon seeing a quorum. Chair Anderson stated for the record that, the One-Stop Certification Document was tabled previously in April 2020, July 2020, October 2020, January 2021, and April 2021 due to COVID-19 delays and will continue to be tabled with the hope to revisit this item in the July 2021 Full Board meeting. On March 30, 2021 Governor Asa Hutchinson extended the State’s public health and disaster emergency via Executive Order 21-07 until May 30, 2021.

Report of New Assistant Director: Chair Tom Anderson acknowledged the ADWS announcement of Mr. Eddie Thomas as the new Employment Assistance Unit’s Assistant Director.

Agenda Item 1 – ACTION – Minutes of the January 26, 2021, Full Board Meeting: Chair Tom Anderson asked if there were any additional corrections or revisions to the January 26, 2021, Full Board meeting minutes.

Hearing none, a motion to accept the January 26, 2021, Full Board meeting minutes with no corrections or revisions was made by Ms. Brian Marsh followed by Mr. Robert Thorne making the second motion. The motion carried unanimously with none opposed.

The following votes were recorded and voiced by Board Members on a roll vote to Approve, Disapprove, or Abstain for no vote: Mr. Carl Daughtery proxy for Mr. Joseph Baxter – Approve, Mr. Len Blaylock III – Approve, Ms. Karen Breashears – Approve, Mr. Lindsay Brown – Absent, Mr. Scott Bull – Approve, Dr. Charisse Childers – Approve, Judge Brandon Ellison – Approve, Mr. Randy Finegan – Approve, Mr. Jeff Griffin – Approve, Ms. Melissa Hanesworth – Absent, Mr. Randy Henderson – Approve, Ms. Abby Houseworth – Approve, Mr. Alan Hughes – Approve, Ms. Rebecca Ives – Approve, Mr. Charles Johnson – Absent, Mr. Johnny Key – Absent, Ms. Candice Lawrence – Approve, Ms. Holley Little – Approve, Ms. Alisha Lewis proxy for Dr. Maria Markham – Approve, Mr. Brian Marsh – Approve, Dr. Trenia Miles – Approve, Mr. George Nunnally – Approve, Mr. Justin Major proxy for Secretary Mike Preston – Approve, Dr. Julie Roberson – Approve, Mayor James Sanders – Absent, Mr. Kelley Sharp – Approve, Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes – Approve, Mr. Robert Thorne – Approve, and Dr. Diana Wright – Approve.

Report of Chairperson: Chair Anderson informed Board Members he has been monitoring the Local Workforce Development Boards across the state by Zoom along with the National Governors Association (NGA) State Chairs and Liaisons meeting in March. Chair Anderson proceeded with informing Board Members about the Workforce Information Advisory Council (WIAC) Committee under the Secretary of Labor which he was appointed to last year. The committee deals with the Bureau of Labor Statistics, which reports its findings to the Department of Labor.

Report of Director: Chair Tom Anderson recognized Board Member and Arkansas Division of Workforce Services (ADWS) Director, Dr. Charisse Childers to address the Full Board. Dr. Childers discussed the bills in the General Assembly. The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services has the following four bills: Three bills regarding unemployment; one bill specific to TANF; and one bill regarding the Work Pace Program. Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) has two bills currently filed: one regarding an amendment of the forgiveness of student loans; and, the other the telecommunications access program which would allow more revenue. Dr. Childers stated the unemployment rate decreased to 4.2% in December 2020 from 6.3% in November 2020. Dr. Childers reported the civilian labor workforce had an increase of 38,904 as a result of 65,543 more Arkansans employed and 26,639 fewer Arkansans unemployed. The US job rate held steady at 6.7%. In December 2019, the number of unemployed Arkansans was down to 12,396. However, the number of unemployed Arkansans increased sharply from December 2019 to December 2020 with significant gains in several categories. Dr. Childers indicated there were four changes to the several unemployment programs and one new program was added with the Continued Assistance Act for Unemployed Workers in 2020. The following have been reinstated until March 13, 2021: Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) with an additional \$300 per week, Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA), Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (PUC) was reinstated with additional weeks, Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) was reinstated with additional weeks, and the new program Mixed Earners Compensation provides an additional \$100 per week. Dr Childers stated the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program now requires additional documentation along an identity verification beginning February 8, 2021. The details for the Mixed Earners Compensation will be administered by the local offices around mid-February. Dr. Childers stated as of January 16, 2021 unemployment claims dropped to 4,079 but still higher than the reported 1,804 unemployment claims from January 16, 2020. Dr. Childers announced the promotion of Mr. Kris Jones to Assistant Director of Office of Financial Management. He took the place of Mr. Brian Hicks upon Mr. Hicks' retirement at the end of December 2020.

Report of Staff: Chair Anderson recognized Board Staff Mr. Kris Jones. Mr. Jones spoke about his time with WIOA and about looking forward to his new position as Assistant Director of Office of Financial Management. Mr. Jones thanked the staff for the rollout of the Work Base Learning program, Virtual Job Fairs, TANF grants, the short term benefits program enacted by the CARES Act, and the progress of the longitudinal data bases tied in with the Ready For Life Project.

Report of Committees:

The first quarter of 2020 was the last committee meeting for Strategic Planning and Program and Performance Evaluation due to COVID-19. The TANF Oversight Committee was scheduled to meet on April 19, 2020 and report to the Full Board during the April 20, 2020 meeting. However, the committee meeting had to be rescheduled.

Agenda Item 2 – Action – Council Resolution 2021-1: Chair Anderson brought attention to Council Resolution 2021-1 for the Board Member stipend payments. Arkansas Law allows Boards to pay stipends

of \$110 to those non-governmental members who choose to accept them. The board members shall receive no other compensation, expense reimbursement, or in-lieu-of payments.

As presented with no revisions, a motion to accept the Council Resolution 2021-1, Board Member Stipend was made by Mr. Kelley Sharp followed by Ms. Karen Breashears making the second motion. The motion carried unanimously with none opposed.

The following votes were recorded and voiced by Board Members on a roll vote to Approve, Disapprove, or Abstain for no vote: Mr. Joseph Baxter – Approve, Mr. Len Blaylock III – Approve, Ms. Karen Breashears – Approve, Mr. Lindsay Brown – Absent, Mr. Scott Bull – Approve, Ms. Chanda Chacon – Absent, Dr. Charisse Childers – Approve, Judge Brandon Ellison – Approve, Mr. Randy Finegan – Approve, Mr. Jeff Griffin – Absent, Ms. Melissa Hanesworth – Absent, Mr. Randy Henderson – Approve, Ms. Abby Houseworth – Approve, Mr. Alan Hughes – Absent, Ms. Rebecca Ives – Absent, Mr. Charles Johnson – Approve, Mr. Johnny Key – No Vote Voiced, Ms. Candice Lawrence – Approve, Ms. Holley Little – Absent, Dr. Maria Markham – No Vote Voiced, Mr. Brian Marsh – Approve, Dr. Trenia Miles – Approve, Mr. George Nunnally – Approve, Mr. Steve Sparks proxy for Secretary Mike Preston – Approve, Dr. Julie Roberson – Approve, Mayor James Sanders – Approve, Mr. Kelley Sharp – Approve, Ms. Betsy Barnes proxy for Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes – Approve, Mr. Robert Thorne – Approve, and Dr. Diana Wright – Approve.

Agenda Item 3 – Action – Administrative Forms – New Year: Chair Anderson recognized Board Staff Ms. Rebecca Edwards to review the administrative forms for the Board to update their personal information for the new year in the database system. Ms. Edwards informed members January 31, 2021 was the deadline to file annual financial interest disclosure statements with the Arkansas Secretary of State. Additionally, ADWS offered assistance for notary services and filing.

Agenda Item 4 – Informational – Program Year 2019 WIOA – Annual Report Narrative Updates: Chair Anderson recognized WIOA Roundtable members who represent the WIOA Core Programs to provide updates regarding activities during PY 2019. WIOA Core Partners presenting today were Kris Jones, Assistant Director, Arkansas Division of Workforce Services Employment Assistance; Dr. Trenia Miles, Director of Adult Education Section and Ms. Christy Lamas, Deputy Commissioner of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services. Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes, Director of Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind, was not present today but had previously asked that she be allowed to make her presentation at the next Board Meeting. One of the functions of the Arkansas Workforce Development Board is to assist the Governor in preparation of the annual reports as described in WIOA Section 116(d) paragraphs (1) and (2) of WIOA Sec. 116(d). Mr. Kris Jones listed and discussed the major components of the narrative report while both he and Mr. Elroy Willoughby reported on WIOA Title I and III performance.

Board Members heard updates on WIOA Title IV from Arkansas Rehabilitation Services Deputy Commissioner, Christy Lamas. Ms. Lamas gave a brief summary of the Arkansas Rehabilitation Services training of real people with a disability to work and obtain an independent lifestyle. One of the largest sections of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) is their Field Services. Ms. Lamas highlighted two people who had successfully gone through the program, Sara Murphy and Tonya Mays. Ms. Lamas then discussed the Arkansas Career Development Center (ACDC) which reports Field Services along with their accommodation section. They have added the following new programs: Virtual Security Classes reviewed by the Arkansas State Police; Virtual Driver Education; and direct services provided to other programs throughout the field offices. ARS operates a high school program in the summer through which high school students can come together to learn and gain certifications. ACDC provides virtual Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), and Cardiopulmonary

Resuscitation (CPR) classes along with onsite Forklift training, virtual professional guest services, and a variety of other services to support ARS clients comprehensively. Ms. Lamas explained through the section called Business Engagement. ARS reaches out to businesses with their mission statement and collaborates with businesses to help clients find work and help keep individuals currently working to stay in their jobs. ARS serve young adults between the ages of 16-24 who want to engage and be a part of the workforce. Last year, ARS serviced 12,159 Arkansans with disabilities. Ms. Lamas then stated ARS is embracing the team approach by engaging all the sections with employers, business engagement services, hands-on assistance, technological expertise of doctors, psychologists, and occupational therapists, and professional one-on-one coaching of field services counselors to provide successful employment for our clients.

Board Members heard updates on WIOA Title II from Adult Education, Dr. Trenia Miles. Dr. Miles presented a Power-Point presentation on the Workforce Alliance for Growth in the Economy (WAGE). WAGE serves the unemployed and underemployed offering six types of certificates for employment. Dr. Miles stated out of 20,000 adult students, 80% are below an 8th - grade level. Dr. Miles discussed the two levels of WAGE Certificates, beginning with WAGE Level I. This level includes basic academic skills instruction, career exploration, financial literacy, digital literacy, and workforce preparation. The WAGE Level II Certificate is harder and requires placement, includes education/training in Manufacturing, Health Science, Business Management and Administration, Hospitality and Tourism, and Education and Training. Dr. Miles highlighted the Arkansas Education Providers – Northwest Technical Institute (NWTI) Adult Education and NWTI College Certified Nursing Assistant Bridge Program with nine completed CNA classes, 78 adult learners enrolled in CNA classes, 36% Educational Functioning Level (EFL) increase, and 68% certification achievers. Fort Smith Adult Education has partnered with the Department of Human Services (DHS) on the Peers Achieving Collaborative Treatment (PACT) Grant to serve incarcerated women in the local jail by providing education, childcare classes, and training for employment. Wal-Mart has donated \$12,000 to Fort Smith Adult Education (FSAE) to assist these women. Lastly, they have partnered with the Fort Smith School District in offering tutorial classes to help parents navigate online learning with their children. University of Arkansas Monticello (UAM)-McGehee – Adult Education Program has partnered with Simmons Bank located in Monticello, AR. Simmons Bank provided a \$2,500 grant to support workforce development which by offsetting testing fees through the General Education Diploma (GED) scholarship even though the State pays 80% of the GED testing. The grant will also be used to provide short-term training programs. Southern Arkansas University (SAU) – Tech Adult Education had 11 CNA graduates from November 2, 2020 – December 17, 2020. Seven out of the 11 graduates were TANF participants, six of the seven TANF clients made educational gains; all 11 received OSHA 410 in General Healthcare credential; and six have become employed. SAU-Tech Adult Education has partnered with SAU Tech College, TANF, Career Pathways Initiative, Pine Hills Rehab, Wentworth Nursing, and Title 1-B Adult Programs in ensuring the success of their students.

Agenda Item 5 – Informational – Reimagine Arkansas Workforce (RAW) Grant: Chair Anderson recognized Mr. Eduardo Lemm, ADWS Regulatory Specialist to provide a brief update to the Full Board. Mr. Lemm updated information regarding the Department of Education issuing a Notice of Inviting Applications (NIA) for the FY2020 Education Stabilization Fund – Reimagine Workforce (ESF-RWPO) Grants program under the CARES Act, making available \$127.5 million. The Arkansas Workforce Development Board was one of eight State Workforce Boards awarded this funding.

Agenda Item 6 – Informational – Workforce System Evaluation Project Update: Chair Anderson recognized Board Staff, Mr. Kris Jones to give a Workforce System Evaluation Project update. Mr. Jones reported evaluations of activities under the WIOA I Core Programs are being conducted in order to

promote continuous improvement and research, test innovative services and strategies, and achieve high levels of performance and outcomes. A contract was entered into between ADWS and the University of Arkansas (UA) to carry out these requirements of federal regulation.

Agenda Item 7 – Informational – Arkansas Workforce Development Board Codes of Conduct: Chair Anderson recognized ADWS Policy Specialist, Dr. Claudia Griffin to review the Arkansas Workforce Development Board Codes of Conduct in accordance to the federal and state laws and regulations with the members of the Full Board. Dr. Griffin discussed conflict of interest, Freedom of Information Act, and the Arkansas Sunshine Law.

Agenda Item 8 – Informational – USDOL Governance TAT Project Updates: Chair Anderson recognized ADWS Employment Assistance Deputy Director, Beverly Lovett to discuss an opportunity to partake in the Arkansas Governance Training Project for the Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) members, Arkansas Workforce Development Board (AWDB) Full Board members, and Chief Elected Officials(CEO), and other state stakeholders offered by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) – Dallas Regional Office for State Governance training. Ms. Lovett highlighted the training covered an overview of the WIOA workforce development system; governance roles and responsibilities of the AWDB, Local Workforce Development Boards, and Chief Elected Officials; WIOA vision for state and local boards; state and local Board memberships; the roles of state and local board staff; and relationships to other system partners and components.

Board Open Discussion: Chair Anderson asked board members for any additional items for discussion. Hearing none, Chair Anderson opened the floor to allow the public the opportunity to speak before the Full Board.

Public Speaking Opportunity: Chair Anderson addressed members of the public attending the meeting through electronic means and extended the opportunity to speak before the Full Board. After opening the floor for the public and a brief silence with the telephone lines unmuted hearing no public comments, Chair Anderson moved into the announcements.

Announcements: Chair Anderson announced the committee meetings of the Arkansas Workforce Development Board will convene “as needed” due to the COVID-19 pandemic and out of respect for Board Member’s schedules. He added the next Full Board meeting is set for July 20, 2021. Board Staff will keep everyone aware of any changes to the schedule or the type of meeting, whether virtual or in-person, as the State progresses through COVID-19 under the guidance of Governor Asa Hutchinson.

Adjourn: As presented, Chair Tom Anderson adjourned the AWDB Full Board meeting at 11:10 a.m., on a motion made by Ms. Karen Breashears, followed by Mr. Randy Thorne making the second motion. The motion carried unanimously with none opposed.

The following votes were recorded and voiced by Board Members on a roll vote to Approve, Disapprove, or Abstain for no vote: Mr. Carl Daughtery proxy for Mr. Joseph Baxter – Approve, Mr. Len Blaylock III – Approve, Ms. Karen Breashears – Approve, Mr. Lindsay Brown – Absent, Mr. Scott Bull – Approve, Ms. Chanda Chacon – Absent, Dr. Charisse Childers – Approve, Judge Brandon Ellison – Approve, Mr. Randy Finegan – Approve, Mr. Jeff Griffin – No Vote Voiced, Ms. Melissa Hanesworth – Absent, Mr. Randy Henderson – Approve, Ms. Abby Houseworth – Approve, Mr. Alan Hughes – Absent, Mr. Charles Johnson – Approve, Ms. Rebecca Ives – Absent, Mr. Johnny Key – No Vote Voiced, Ms. Candice Lawrence – Approve, Ms. Holley Little - Absent, Dr. Maria Markham – No Vote Voiced, Mr. Brian Marsh – Approve,

Dr. Trena Miles – Approve, Mr. George Nunnally – Absent, Secretary Mike Preston – No Vote Voiced, Dr. Julie Roberson – Approve, Mayor James Sanders – Approve, Mr. Kelley Sharp – Approve, Ms. Betsy Barnes proxy for Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes – Approve, Mr. Robert Thorne – No Vote Voiced, and Dr. Diana Wright – Approve.

Tom Anderson, Board Chair
Arkansas Workforce Development Board

Director Workforce Development
Arkansas Division of Workforce Services

*Minutes recorded by Monica Simon
Arkansas Division of Workforce Services Staff*