

MINUTES
SENATE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE, AND LABOR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE, AND LABOR
Meeting Jointly
Wednesday, October 8, 2025
10:00 AM
Room A, MAC
Little Rock, Arkansas

Committee members present: Senators Missy Irvin, Chair; Dave Wallace, Vice Chair; Ricky Hill, Fredrick J. Love, and Clint Penzo; Representatives Jeff Wardlaw, Chair; Jeremy Wooldridge, Vice Chair; Fred Allen, Glenn Barnes, Mary Bentley, Denise Jones Ennett, Kenneth B. Ferguson, Zack Gramlich, Dolly Henley, Lee Johnson, Jack Ladyman, Stephen Magie, Aaron Pilkington, Jay Richardson, Ryan A. Rose, and Bart Schulz

Other members present: Senators Justin Boyd, Tyler Dees, Mark Johnson, and Dan Sullivan; Representatives Harlen Breaux, Alyssa Brown, Joey L. Carr, Paul Childress, Jessie McGruder, David Ray, Johnny Rye, Joy Springer, and DeAnn Vaught

Representative Wardlaw called the meeting to order.

Consideration to Approve the August 6, 2025, September 10, 2025, and September 11, 2025, Meeting Minutes [Exhibits B1-B3]

Representative Ladyman made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Representative Bentley, and the motion carried.

Overview of Hiring Procedures at Human Development Centers

Jennifer Brezee, Director, Division of Developmental Disabilities Services, Department of Human Services (DHS); Melissa Weatherton, Director, Specialty Medicaid Services, DHS; and Tony Robertson, Legislative Personnel Administrator, Bureau of Legislative Research; discussed the current staffing and hiring procedures at Human Development Centers.

Katrina Robertson, President, Booneville Chapter, Families and Friends of Care Facility Residents (FF/CFR), and Terry Johnson, President, FF/CFR, spoke about the impact of staffing challenges on families connected with the Human Development Center.

Representative Ladyman made a motion to exempt vacant, direct care positions at the Human Development Centers from the new hiring procedures. The motion was not accepted because it was determined the process to exempt direct care positions from the new hiring procedures must be enacted via statute rather than through committee action.

DHS, Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health, Review of Rule, Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility Services for Under Age 21 [Exhibit D]

Melissa Weatherton, Director, Specialty Medicaid Services, DHS; Martina Smith, Director, Division of Provider Services and Quality Assurance, DHS; and Paula Stone, Director, Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health, DHS; discussed two new manuals that will provide minimum standards of services to enrolled beneficiaries who are admitted into a Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility.

With no other business, the meeting adjourned at 11:50 a.m.