



**MEETING OF THE  
TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION**

**DATE**

**SEPTEMBER 21, 2021**

1 TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2021

2 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Good morning, the meeting  
3 is called to order. Mr. Trobman, has anyone signed up for public  
4 comment?

5 MR. TROBMAN: No, sir.

6 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you. Good morning.

7 MS. GONZALEZ: Morning.

8 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you. This brings us  
9 to the end of Agenda Items 3 through 7. Let's pause for a couple  
10 minutes so we can get everybody in here for the rest of the  
11 meeting. This is Agenda Item 8, project proposals regarding  
12 statewide initiative funds for ending the middle skills gap.

13 MS. ARBOUR: Morning, commissioners, Mr.  
14 Serna. For the record, Courtney Arbour, workforce division.  
15 Under this Agenda Item we will have two items for your  
16 consideration. I'll start with the first, which is related to  
17 the discussion paper that is posted and entitled Ending the  
18 Middle Skills Gap. The projects I will briefly summarize were  
19 discussed by you all on June 30 in a public work session, and  
20 they were all approved in concept, but we were asked the nail  
21 down the funding types, amounts, and a few other details. We  
22 were asked to bring these items back under a single action, and  
23 those specifics have been briefed with your offices and are in  
24 the posted discussion paper and a high-level summary document,  
25 which is also posted. At that work session, Chairman, a white

1 paper was shared by you entitled Ending the Middle Skills Gap  
2 through Comprehensive Career Pathways. It included discussion of  
3 the following concepts, which we were to bring back details on  
4 costs for a Career Pathways mobile application, a career  
5 coaching platform, certifications for mobile--excuse me, for  
6 Metrix users, training and certifications in high demand in  
7 manufacturing advanced trades, procurement and credential  
8 tracker. Commissioner Alvarez, you presented recommendations for  
9 complementary projects, which were the virtual reality  
10 technology for career exploration, short-term training for  
11 parents of children and TWC-funded childcare, and you  
12 recommended that we work with TDCJ to make information about  
13 workforce services available in their facilities. Commissioner  
14 Alvarez, we've been working on a project for you, which is an  
15 outreach campaign to certain agency programs, with a refresh of  
16 the Jobs, Y'all campaign. And you recommended that we continue  
17 to focus on the priority population and inclusion of persons  
18 with disabilities and foster youth in our agency outreach  
19 campaigns, programs, and other priorities. A number of AEL-  
20 funded initiatives were considered--(inaudible) development for  
21 construction trades, integrated education and training in  
22 corrections, pre-apprenticeship bridge, family literacy math  
23 call center, and an employer engagement project. The details of  
24 pre-apprenticeship bridge, integrated education and training in  
25 corrections, and the certification for Metrix users proposals

1 were previously approved in a meeting on August 17. Due to  
2 timing, we were able to bring those back a little sooner, and  
3 we're working on those. Today, I'm requesting your consideration  
4 and action on the materials in that Ending the Middle Skill Gap  
5 discussion paper, which is posted today and which was briefed.  
6 As set forth, the funding amounts and funding type that we would  
7 like your approval today are for Career Pathways mobile  
8 application, career coaching services, training and  
9 certifications for in-demand and target occupations, the mobile  
10 credential wallet, Jobs, Y'all and outreach initiative,  
11 curricula development for construction trades, and in addition,  
12 we request approval for the funding type and distribution amount  
13 to boards for the two projects which have a distribution of  
14 boards, and those are virtual reality career exploration pilot  
15 and short-term training for parents in the childcare services  
16 program. I'm happy to answer any questions about those.

17                   CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Stay close, I've got a  
18 couple of questions and comments for you. We've got a public  
19 commenter today, and I'd like to, if I could, get that on the  
20 record, and then we can come back and have a discussion, if that  
21 works for you.

22                   MS. ARBOUR: Certainly.

23                   CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right.

24                   MR. TROBMAN: Commissioners, Les Trobman,  
25 general counsel. We have Tamara Atkinson here.

1 MS. ATKINSON: Good morning, Chairman,  
2 Commissioner Alvarez, Commissioner Demerson, Mr. Serna. It's a  
3 pleasure to be here with you today. My name is Tamara Atkinson  
4 and I have the honor of serving as the chief elected officer--  
5 executive, whoa, sorry--chief executive officer for Workforce  
6 Solutions Capitol area. 2017, 1,808,718. I'm here today to speak  
7 about TWC's push to end the middle skills gap and share one  
8 board's perspective. I'd like to speak briefly to the story  
9 behind those numbers I started with. Let's start with 2017, or  
10 2017. That is the year that the Capitol area workforce board  
11 launched our own middle skills initiative. The purpose of that  
12 initiative was to support and train local residents, and our  
13 promise was to annual report back to our community the outcomes  
14 that we saw. Those results were just reported to me and my team  
15 last week through our evaluation partner University of Texas Ray  
16 Marshall Center. I'd like to share with you some of those result  
17 highlights. Despite the worst labor market in years due to the  
18 pandemic, year three of our middle skills initiative, which  
19 ended in October of 2020, saw participants out-perform previous  
20 years. One thousand, eight hundred and eight is the number of  
21 year three completers that we had going through supported middle  
22 skills training in the Austin region, compared to the prior  
23 year. Seven thousand, eighteen dollars was the median quarterly  
24 earnings of those completers, up from the previous year of  
25 6,673. So, as I consider the initiatives before you today aimed

1 at ending the middle skills gap, I am hopeful that I can read  
2 between the lines an invitation to work in concert with the  
3 local boards and our respective efforts in our local areas.  
4 Indeed, the boards are your boots on the ground, as Commissioner  
5 Demerson likes to say. The pandemic has demonstrated that boards  
6 are designed to be both locally responsive and more agile than a  
7 state agency can be. But make no mistake about it--I understand  
8 the significant and essential role that the state plays in  
9 supporting workforce boards' work. The continued dance between  
10 the boards and TWC should be our greatest Texas two-step. When  
11 the state leads on some issues, the boards can be more graceful,  
12 seamless follows. And there are times when the effort is really  
13 on the partner dancer, or in this case, the local board. As a  
14 workforce board in Austin, we have dedicated staff who provide  
15 personal attention, we have physical facilities to serve our  
16 communities, and we have the local connections to leaders,  
17 business, and community-based organizations. Okay, a few more  
18 numbers: 605,358. That is the number of posted online job ads in  
19 the Austin region. Now this number: 39,093. This is the number  
20 of active online resumes, or active job-seekers in the Austin  
21 region. That's 16 and a half more job opportunities than we  
22 currently have registered available talent. Our economies are  
23 changing. Our employers' needs are changing. Our workers are at  
24 times confused, frustrated, and tired. Our systems must adapt. I  
25 believe that workforce knowledge, expertise, and access to

1 supports and services closes that 16 and a half time gap in our  
2 region, and we will keep Texas competitive if we continue to  
3 grow the skills of our successful. I've often said that our  
4 system needs to remain relevant in the face of all these market  
5 pressures related to workforce development. I have agreed with  
6 these statements. But lately, I've started thinking that perhaps  
7 relevance may be too low of a bar. The public workforce system  
8 is relevant. We are making a difference in our communities, and  
9 our communities are better off as a result of our assistance and  
10 partnership. Call it our dance with the Texas Workforce  
11 Commission. But I suggest that we need to strive for more. We  
12 need to strive to be of consequence, a system that strives to  
13 both respond and get ahead of worker preparation and worker  
14 support trends. While there are not enough details to comment on  
15 any specific initiative offered up in the ending middle skills  
16 gap concept, I see these as contributing to a refocus by both  
17 TWC and then the boards, away from only talking about programs  
18 and program performance, and towards a higher, more macro goal.  
19 That higher goal is to be a valued and trusted partner to our  
20 economic development agencies, our business leaders, our worker  
21 communities. In short, I hope that we continue to strive to be  
22 of consequence together. I choose to think of it as the boards  
23 and TWC in the most graceful Texas two-step ever. Now, one last  
24 number: 103 million--\$103,000,000. That is the total post-  
25 program wage increase compared to pre-program earnings according

1 to the Capitol area's 2020 impact report. That's new money  
2 infused back into our communities that represents employers  
3 finding the talent they need, and that represents families who  
4 have increased their household earnings. It's a start, and it's  
5 aligned with the middle skills initiative. I look forward to  
6 dancing this Ending the Middle Skills Gap two-step with you  
7 right down the middle of the great Texas dance floor. Thank you  
8 very much.

9 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you. Any questions  
10 or comments for Ms. Atkinson?

11 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: None here, Chairman.

12 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: And Tamara, thank  
13 you for appearing. I know you talked about working in concert,  
14 and then we proceeded with the dance and the like, and you  
15 nailed what my thoughts were exactly--that whatever we're  
16 approving or placing into action here from the dais, that we're  
17 doing that in concert with our local workforce boards. And then  
18 even building on some of the things that you guys are doing. You  
19 started in 2017, and you've seen success. You've done some  
20 things that are working. And so, I hope the initiatives that  
21 we're pushing forward today work together to either propel you  
22 further, or some of the things that you've worked on, that you  
23 help us in a sense of making sure that we're moving fast as  
24 well. So, thank you for being here.

25

1 MS. ATKINSON: Thank you. Glad to be in  
2 partnership, sir.

3 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Chairman, I do a  
4 question. So, can you tell me, when you mentioned résumés that  
5 you had and all that data that you just shared with us, what are  
6 the ages of those individuals? Would you happen to have that?

7 MS. ATKINSON: I'm afraid, Commissioner, I  
8 don't have that data available, but I'm happy to report back to  
9 your office.

10 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Great. Please do.

11 MS. ATKINSON: Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: One point I wanted to zero  
13 in on, and I appreciate your comments, because I think they  
14 bring some clarity to our efforts and intention to really  
15 reinforce our Workforce Solutions efforts across the state, but  
16 certainly our brand. I appreciate your recognition of this  
17 particular package today. It contains a lot of items. One that  
18 would directly--the success of which will directly hinge on the  
19 boards that are implementing. That's the particular program that  
20 Commissioner Alvarez advanced in terms of virtual reality  
21 goggles. It will be completely dependent on the ability for  
22 boards to implement that, and I'm very comfortable making that  
23 investment in order for boards to be able to make that kind of  
24 action possible for people who are in career exploration. There  
25 are other elements of this particular funding clarification that

1 will be things that TWC necessarily has to do statewide. But I  
2 think ultimately, listening to you talk, I think ultimately all  
3 of us need to stay in communication. I think we do a good job of  
4 that now. I think there will be more opportunities for  
5 communication moving forward, and the reason I say that is  
6 completely predicated on some things you just said in terms of  
7 there will always be things that the boards need to take the  
8 lead on. There will be a number of things that TWC needs to take  
9 the lead on, and I think we really maximize both our financial  
10 and our human resources when we're able to see sort of a nice  
11 division of responsibility on that. But ultimately, at the end  
12 of the day, even something that an individual board champions, I  
13 think at the state level we're always gonna have an eye to how  
14 to scale that up so that it might be of benefit statewide. And  
15 so, boards will, in so many instances, be the key to kinda  
16 unlock the potential of those types of projects, even those  
17 projects that TWC may be leading and implementing. Boards will  
18 always have insight. So, let me just say thank you very, very  
19 much for making time out of what must be a very busy day to come  
20 up here and share your thoughts with us. I judge from your  
21 comments you're supportive of our efforts, and for that, I'm  
22 grateful. But perhaps I'm more grateful for really this promise  
23 that you've kind of left on the table, which is you see the  
24 potential for even more work in this space--work that you can  
25 only really commit Capitol Area Workforce Solutions to, but

1 knowing that, it must mean that there are other boards who feel  
2 similarly to you in the sense that look, we just want an  
3 initiative that helps people. And I think for me that's good  
4 fuel for our idea machine here, is to always keep looking for  
5 things that we can do. But it's absolutely critical that we hear  
6 from you and your colleagues at the boards across the state for  
7 things that would be beneficial to you. So, thank you for not  
8 just being interested, but for being engaged. Because I think  
9 there's a lot of interest, and I think the engagement that  
10 you've shown today really shows us that we can probably even go  
11 further than we have in this preliminary step that we're taking,  
12 and it's one that I'm pretty excited about, and I am looking  
13 forward to working in partnership with you to implement these  
14 things. I think we've got a wonderful opportunity ahead of us.

15 MS. ATKINSON: Thank you for the  
16 opportunity.

17 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Any other questions or  
18 comments?

19 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: None for--not for Ms.  
20 Atkinson.

21 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Yeah, I--we'll drag  
22 Courtney back up here (inaudible).

23 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Okay.

24 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: (sounds like) None.

25 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you.

1                   COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Okay, great. So, the  
2 only thing I would like to say is I appreciate the comments, and  
3 I have seen the report that Tamara's talked about in the past  
4 when they worked on it. And I agree with their systems--"Systems  
5 must adapt" was a quote directly from what she stated. On the  
6 discussion paper, where we talked about specifically the Jobs  
7 You All initiative, which I compliment Commissioner Demerson for  
8 talking about that back in June the 30, when we discussed how we  
9 could--how that could assist foster youth and individuals with a  
10 disability. At first, I was--I was a little concerned with Jobs  
11 You All, but since then, I've had an opportunity--Chris Nelson's  
12 wife is a principal at Jubilee High School here in town, and I  
13 had an opportunity to address the individuals there regarding  
14 the future of Texas and where the jobs are going. And one of the  
15 things I found fascinating when I was thinking about asking  
16 these individuals to look at our website or go to--you know, it  
17 was a little difficult for me to tell them, god, I wish it was  
18 easier for us to maneuver and get to our job--our website and  
19 specifically address maybe a concern that that would have. So, I  
20 guess what I'm trying to say is one of the things that I'd like  
21 to consider is looking at the ages, especially the young  
22 population. When we initially rolled out Jobs You All, I think  
23 it was intended so that we could get these young individuals  
24 interested in looking at our websites and opportunities that  
25 were out there for them. And so, checking up or actually going

1 to Texas Reality Check and Texas Career Check and all that. So,  
2 I'm just (inaudible-audio drop) white papers have been discussed  
3 with us, or I should say discussion papers, and the initiatives  
4 have been rolled out, and I do wanna just go out there and say  
5 for the record that I am in support of the Jobs You All  
6 initiative that was rolled out back on June 30 of this year,  
7 with something that I'd like to add to that, once we get to  
8 that--when I get to the motion.

9 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: And Chairman Daniel  
10 (inaudible) so, Courtney just laid out some of the proposed  
11 initiatives and funding amounts and the like, and so I guess  
12 I'll just ask this question (sounds like) as well. So, on number  
13 four, training and certifications for in-demand and targeted  
14 occupations, we have that one at 3.8. It's number four under the  
15 proposed initiatives. What type of certifications are of  
16 interest or of need? What are we looking at there?

17 MS. ARBOUR: Commissioner, with this, we're  
18 proposing to go into contract with an online vendor that  
19 provides any number--there are a lot of companies that are doing  
20 this now, that provide coursework that then links you to the  
21 certificate provider. So, we would be focused on manufacturing,  
22 construction and trades, technology, healthcare. In our work,  
23 we'll be trying to find the most robust platform we can. Likely  
24 there will also be some soft skills or other courses, because

25

1 that's what these vendors tend to provide. But it will be a wide  
2 range of industry, focus, and certificate types.

3 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Okay. Good, and this  
4 vendor probably would know that in a sense, our high-demand  
5 occupations that the boards have, and the like. And also I was  
6 just reminded in a group in San Antonio, Project Quest, and I  
7 know at one point they had training individuals, but the big  
8 hurdle was certifications and being able to pay for those  
9 certifications and the like. And so a program like this would  
10 probably help organizations like that, where they can leverage  
11 what they're doing now, and building on that from that  
12 standpoint. So, in collaboration, as mentioned by all three in  
13 Tamara's presentation, working with those boards, finding out  
14 what the true needs are so that we don't have the two ships  
15 passing in the night, where we're having training and  
16 certifications, but they're of no use to the employers from that  
17 standpoint. And I'll continue to advocate and hammer down on the  
18 fact that we're listening to the employers, finding out what the  
19 true needs are, so that we're addressing those needs. And I have  
20 no doubt that we'll probably be doing that with this as well.  
21 Number five, the mobile credential wallet that's presented, that  
22 one--how many folks (inaudible) \$750,000 (inaudible) so how many  
23 folks would be able to use them and what's the targeted  
24 audience? How would one go about being able to take advantage of  
25 the mobile credential wallet, so that if I'm out there, I'm an

1 individual and I've been stacking credentials of some sort, how  
2 do I become a part of that program, and is it limited in some  
3 form or fashion. I don't know if this may be a pilot-type  
4 initiative, because a dollar amount, I'm not sure of the costs  
5 and all those kind of things.

6 MS. ARBOUR: Commissioner, we have not--we  
7 will procure and go into a contract with a vendor. I have seen  
8 some cost estimates. I'm hoping Kerry Ballast can shoot me a  
9 text or walk up and help to address the possible cost-per on  
10 these. Because we haven't done the procurement, I can't answer  
11 directly, but what would happen is that we will likely be  
12 working with the workforce boards to help identify candidates to  
13 have access to this tool, and then store their credentials and  
14 badges in this tool that we've procured.

15 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Okay. So, that goes  
16 in line with the targeted audience as well. The workforce boards  
17 are submitting individuals for potential use of these wallets.  
18 And so, just very curious about that, wanna know who gets to use  
19 it, how it works. Because if I'm out there or if Sharon Smith is  
20 out there, how does she or he begin to use this, or to become a  
21 part of this mobile credential wallet system that I think is a  
22 good use, but I wanna make sure that we know who's using it and  
23 how they have access to it.

24 MS. ARBOUR: Because there is a cost for  
25 each--

1 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Okay.

2 MS. ARBOUR: --person, we will need to work  
3 out a way to identify the participants who are using it.

4 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Okay. And then  
5 lastly, virtual reality, number six, the VR goggles career  
6 exploration pilot program that's there. When it talks about the  
7 staff that we have here in our LNCI department, it says, "TWC  
8 will identify other available funds to procure this technology  
9 for TWC LNCI outreach specialists." I wanna make sure that we  
10 are--that they're done at the same time, or it's timely; that  
11 the folks in the field don't have the information before our  
12 guys here have it. And so, that's a point that's here. They're  
13 not gonna be included in what we're funding here, but making  
14 sure that we have the funds in place to actually produce what  
15 we're saying we're going to produce on this document.

16 MS. ARBOUR: I believe operating costs have  
17 been identified to move forward with that procurement.

18 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Okay. That's all the  
19 questions I have here. Thank you, Courtney.

20 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: So, I'm reminded almost  
21 every day why I'm glad, Courtney, that you work at TWC.  
22 Unfortunately, I don't remember every day to tell you how glad I  
23 am you work at TWC, so I'm gonna tell you now, and I'm just  
24 gonna apply it forward for the next 180 days or so, and then  
25 remind me, I owe you another compliment at the end of that time.

1 Hey, look, this exercise had to have been pretty difficult, so  
2 we laid out a good framework in June. It had some--it was a  
3 large initiative, it identified some specific programs that  
4 would serve that initiative. It laid out some parameters and  
5 outer boundaries for the initiative itself, and then we made  
6 available in concept \$13 million to pay for everything, and then  
7 kinda dumped it on you and said all right, now figure out how  
8 much everything costs and tell us that it does that. Now, based  
9 on my reading of what you provided us today, you certainly came  
10 in in budget, and it looks like, at least to the best of your  
11 knowledge, that you made some very wise decisions in terms of  
12 how to best allocate scarce resources for some pretty important  
13 projects. And so, I just wanted to get it on the record that I  
14 think you and your team did a great job of exploring these  
15 different things, and helping us find some strategies that would  
16 work. And I think you probably realize, you know, I don't think  
17 we're done here in this space, and I think there'll be more  
18 decision points coming in the future, particularly with regard  
19 to funding. And so, I hope we are able to all of us maintain  
20 that sense of creativity that we had in looking at that. Then  
21 the last thing would be I think you've made some guesses, but  
22 you get to do that. You're in a position where your education  
23 and your experience sort of inform you so that you can make  
24 those kinds of guesses. If we've guessed wrong, I hope you'll  
25 tell us sooner rather than later if we need to make some

1 adjustments, because I don't think--while I think we need to get  
2 this nailed down and make these various procurements and do the  
3 various government things that have to be done for us to  
4 implement these particular parts of the initiative, if we just  
5 didn't get something right or we didn't do enough of something  
6 and too much of another, I personally am really interested in  
7 making those adjustments in as real time as we can get, and  
8 continuing to move the initiative forward. So, all in all, I see  
9 something that completely fulfills what we asked you to do on  
10 June 30, which is you plugged the dollar amounts in and you  
11 stayed within budget. And so, thanks for that. Thanks for a good  
12 discussion on this. And I think--and at least I hope you'll  
13 appreciate the continued discussion moving forward as you  
14 implement this and we react to that implementation. I expect it  
15 to be very good, and I suspect we'll surprise ourselves with how  
16 well some things work, and I think we'll probably find some  
17 things that we might wanna take a different direction on. I  
18 think we just need to be open to that. So, that's just really  
19 the extent of what I want to say. Appreciate it very much.

20 MS. ARBOUR: (Inaudible)

21 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Any other (inaudible-audio  
22 drop).

23 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: --it was from what  
24 was gonna be discussed today. So, I appreciate it. You gave us a  
25 lot of homework the last couple of weeks, so I appreciate the

1 hard work you and your team have put forth, and for identifying  
2 that there is a skills gap there, and that we do certainly need  
3 to talk about automation. I'd also like to take this opportunity  
4 to thank folks like Amy Landrum (SP) and Mary York for coming  
5 into the office and sharing some insight on some ideas that they  
6 had. And so I appreciate everyone's work specifically on this  
7 Agenda Item.

8 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: If there's no more  
9 discussion, is there a motion?

10 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: I have a motion,  
11 Chairman. I move that we approve the project parameters and  
12 funding levels as discussed, and set forth in discussion paper  
13 for Career Pathways mobile application, career coaching  
14 services, training and certifications for in-demand and targeted  
15 occupations, mobile credential wallet, virtual reality career  
16 exploration pilot distribution of 2 million in TANF funds to  
17 each of the 15 boards hiring workforce career and education  
18 outreach specialists to purchase 25 VR headsets and associated  
19 software. Any remaining funds not needed for administrative  
20 expenses to be revisited into--reinvested, I should say, into an  
21 outreach program. Short-term training for parents and childcare  
22 services program, using 2 million in WIOA funds distributed to  
23 the 28 boards as set forth in the discussion paper. Jobs You  
24 All, an outreach initiative, to include a mobile app. Should  
25 additional funds be needed to ensure the inclusion of a mobile

1 app, staff is directed to come back to this commission with a  
2 funding request. Curriculum development for construction trades,  
3 and integrated education and training in corrections. That's my  
4 motion.

5 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: I'll second the  
6 motion.

7 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: It's been moved and  
8 seconded. Is there any further discussion?

9 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Yeah, do you have  
10 anything, Commissioner Alvarez?

11 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: No, nothing here.

12 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Can I ask a quick  
13 question? So, the development of the library of high-value  
14 credentials in Texas--is that going to be a second part of this  
15 (inaudible)--

16 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Mm-hmm.

17 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Okay. All right, no  
18 other comments.

19 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right, any objection  
20 to the motion? I don't hear any. We're unanimous on that.

21 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Great.

22 MS. ARBOUR: On the second item or the first  
23 item?

24 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Yes. What are you asking  
25 me?

1 MS. ARBOUR: Would you like for me to  
2 present the second item--

3 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: (Inaudible)

4 MS. ARBOUR: --or did you just vote?

5 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Well, no, we just voted,  
6 and I was enthusiastically an "aye," so we'll move on to the  
7 next (inaudible).

8 MS. ARBOUR: Okay. All right, thank you. We  
9 were gonna take that second one really quickly. Okay. The second  
10 item presented for your consideration today, commissioners--and  
11 again, Courtney Arbour, for the record--is related to the  
12 discussion paper Middle Skills Initiatives Credential Library.  
13 In addition to what we just discussed, this is a staff  
14 recommendation based on some tri-agency legislation and  
15 conversations we've had with tri-agency partners. We've briefed  
16 your offices on a project proposal that, again, is posted today.  
17 We would partner with a vendor to implement a comprehensive  
18 library of credentials, such as diplomas, certificates,  
19 certifications, digital badges, apprenticeships, licenses, or  
20 degrees. With the coordinating board as a thought partner in the  
21 development, we would partner with a vendor to create this  
22 repository using openly licensed resources and technologies for  
23 the purpose of doing what I've just described. In this first  
24 phase, we would gather and provide information through the  
25 credential inventory and focus on competencies and skills

1 included in a credential, the quality assurance and outcomes of  
2 a credential, the alignment of credentials with industry  
3 standards, the value to the employer of those credentials, and  
4 the role of a credential in a career pathway. We seek direction  
5 today on contracting with a vendor to develop this statewide  
6 library using WIOA and vocational rehabilitation funds totally  
7 \$525,000, and as described in the discussion paper, to hire a  
8 project manager to support and stand up this credential library  
9 and support other tri-agency work for the period of one year.

10 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Questions or comments?

11 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Courtney, the only  
12 question I have is I understand the credential library and all  
13 of that, but can you tell me what role this person will have  
14 when it comes to the tri-agency? I mean, don't we have enough  
15 folks already involved in that? Isn't Kerry involved in those  
16 presentations or discussions, along with some of our offices?  
17 Would that be replacing her, or--I'm just curious.

18 MS. ARBOUR: This person would work  
19 alongside Kerry and I and many other staff in the agency who  
20 work on tri-agency initiatives. We have a number of workgroups  
21 that Adam Leonard and Mariana Vega and Tom McCarty have  
22 participated in. This staff member would help with the  
23 procurement and standing up this credential library, and then  
24 support through project management some of these other ongoing  
25 tasks of the tri-agency. There are a lot of moving parts to the

1 work and the different workgroups, and so this person would help  
2 support that effort, working alongside Kerry and I in the  
3 workforce division.

4 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: So, would the offices  
5 be briefed periodically?

6 MS. ARBOUR: Yes.

7 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Okay. No other  
8 questions.

9 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: (Inaudible) My only  
10 question, Courtney, on the bullets, it says "used by employers  
11 in the state." So, the library--any examples of the employer, so  
12 if you're an employer out there, how would this be of use to  
13 them? What's a good example?

14 MS. ARBOUR: The development of a credential  
15 library is a long, multi-year process. In the beginning we would  
16 be working with higher ed and career schools and colleges and  
17 universities to upload all of the many credentials they offer,  
18 and provide a lot of detail about those. Over time, we would  
19 like to prove out the value of each of these to employers. And  
20 whether they're industry-recognized, industry-based credentials,  
21 we would like through this process to bear out the value of  
22 these credentials to employers in Texas. But Commissioner, it's  
23 a long road, honestly, to get to that point. Our first phase,  
24 really, is to just develop the library and provide a format

25

1 working with the coordinating board to bring in all of the  
2 information into this, and work on de-duplication.

3 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Okay. So, let me  
4 know if I can do anything that would be of assistance with those  
5 employer organizations that are out there as we're developing  
6 this. There may be input that they can provide that will be of  
7 value to the vendor that's selected for this on the front end  
8 that might benefit long-term on the back end. So, here to serve.

9 MS. ARBOUR: Thank you. I will tell you that  
10 TEA surveys employers every couple of years for their CTE  
11 development work, and so this--and we had some legislation this  
12 session that creates an advisory group for this same--for the  
13 goal of--I'm gonna forget the bill number, but for the goal of--

14 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Thirty-seven sixty-  
15 seven. Thirty-seven sixty-seven?

16 MS. ARBOUR: Yes, thank you, Commissioner,  
17 3767--with the goal of identifying credentials of value. So,  
18 there is a lot of good work being done in this area. It will  
19 just take us a while to take this inventory and build that value  
20 into it.

21 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Good. Here to help.  
22 All right.

23 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: So, you mentioned the  
24 higher education coordinating board. Is this something we'll be  
25 working in tandem with or parallel to?

1 MS. ARBOUR: This credential library, we  
2 would be working in tandem with.

3 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Okay. So, this'll be a  
4 direct partnership between this agency and the coordinating  
5 board.

6 MS. ARBOUR: Yes, the coordinating board  
7 intends to be the communicator to the community colleges and  
8 helping them to upload the information into the library once  
9 it's procured.

10 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Okay. So, once, like--  
11 how's this library gonna get used once it's--you say it's a long  
12 road, so I assume that means weeks, not days, to get it--I'm  
13 kidding. This is gonna take years to populate this, but we're  
14 gonna do a lot of work here. I think it's good work. But a year,  
15 two years, three years, however long it takes to do a good job  
16 of this, how will somebody use this library? Like, what's the  
17 final use for this once it's deemed ready to go?

18 MS. ARBOUR: The final use for us, I think,  
19 in our community, is to be able to see this--a full library of  
20 credentials that hopefully over time has been culled down to be  
21 de-duplicated and of highest value to employers in the state,  
22 and use it in decision-making. Employers can use this to take a  
23 look at maybe some of the various things that are available to  
24 them or other like employers. But it's really an information  
25 source for the public.

1                   CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Yeah. So, would it  
2 ultimately be a tool someone could use to say I have this  
3 particular kind of credential, I really want a new job. Would it  
4 be something that could power, either on its own merits or  
5 perhaps power another kind of project so that people could look  
6 and see what they have, and use that in some career exploration  
7 effort to apply that, perhaps to a field they didn't think of or  
8 a business or company that they didn't think of?

9                   MS. ARBOUR: It could, and particularly when  
10 it's coupled with the Career Pathways tool that you all--the app  
11 that you all just approved. Those two things together will  
12 provide information to someone who's trying to transition into a  
13 new career or look to see what they're eligible for based on the  
14 education they already have.

15                   CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Yeah, I mean, here's a  
16 scenario I think that plagues us a little bit in the state,  
17 which is, you know, I think there's a lot of credentials out  
18 there. I think there's a lot of credentials of consequence out  
19 there. I don't think, necessarily, that they're all catalogued  
20 in one place where we can really understand all the different  
21 options that people have in terms of getting credentialing that  
22 would lead them to the type of career that they would like to  
23 see themselves in, at least in terms of taking care of their  
24 family or contributing to their community, or whatever it is  
25 that they're--whatever stage of that career that they're in. I

1 mean, I'm very supportive of this, in the sense that, you know,  
2 I think it helps us to be able to capture some things that don't  
3 meet other various definitions within the state, because some  
4 things are pre-defined. This seems to be a lot more open  
5 definition. A credential is a credential by its own merits, and  
6 particularly if any one employer--and I mean that--any one  
7 employer requires a particular training. You know, I think we  
8 would want to catalogue that somewhere so that it is easier for us  
9 to advise people in terms of how they chart their career. So,  
10 what I see here in front of me is a really small amount of  
11 money, which I think gets us started on what I perceive to be a  
12 much larger kind of effort, and one that would be necessarily a  
13 multi-year effort. Not just to populate it, but I think the  
14 maintenance of this will require quite a bit of work each year,  
15 and I'm anxious to tackle that. I see a lot of uses for this  
16 tool, and I see a lot of ways this could power some other things  
17 that we've been wanting to do, and some things we're already  
18 doing, and help us do that better. If I could, just for a  
19 second, turn my attention to the person that you want to hire, so,  
20 the parameters of house bill 3767 gave us the option to really  
21 supplement our staff with folks that would help us work  
22 specifically on tri-agency initiatives. And as I recall, they  
23 actually gave this agency some significant latitude in terms of  
24 how that works with our FTE cap. I'm assuming we would bring  
25 this person in under that particular provision of 3767. This

1 would not count toward our FTE cap. And then I always trust you  
2 on WIOA--obviously, that meets the requirements to use WIOA  
3 dollars for that. So, this additional staff person would be paid  
4 for with existing federal dollars, and would not in any way push  
5 us up against our FTE cap because of the special provisions of  
6 3767. Am I understanding all of that correctly?

7 MS. ARBOUR: You are. That is correct.

8 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Is there any reason why  
9 we've only done a one-year appointment? I'm only a little  
10 concerned. I actually worked a one-year job for three years one  
11 time in the past, and--but it was a little bit nerve--I was in  
12 my early twenties, and so it didn't really seem like a problem  
13 to take a one-year job. Now that I think about it that should  
14 have been nerve-wracking, but that's just not how it was back  
15 then. So, hiring someone on a one-year appointment, does that  
16 limit our pool? Are there a number of project workers that sort  
17 of like the ability to work one project and then move on to the  
18 next one? Have we thought about any of that? I assume  
19 something's driving the one-year appointment and not a three-  
20 year or a five-year kind of project appointment, since I think  
21 we've all agreed this project's gonna take longer than one year  
22 to really be implemented. I'm just curious with the thought  
23 process on that.

24 MS. ARBOUR: Well, I think today we were  
25 just looking for the first year of guidance.

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CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Okay.

MS. ARBOUR: And I do believe it will be a much longer need than the 12 months, but we could--you all can set aside additional years' funding for the position in order to post it for a two-year period instead of 12 months, or at the end of the 12 months, we can look at options.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Is there an option to retain that person at the end of the 12 months? Yes? Okay. That satisfies me.

COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Chairman brings up some valid concerns regarding this individual. I'm curious, Courtney, would this be 2021 money or 2022 money?

MS. ARBOUR: This is proposed out of the 2021 balance.

COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Okay. And have we had conversations with TWIC regarding their credentials? Is TWIC involved in this discussion as well?

MS. ARBOUR: TWIC is involved in many of the discussions that we've had on the various projects we're talking about today, kind of a tri-agency focus--

COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Right.

MS. ARBOUR: --projects. But we will continue to include TWIC in the discussions, particularly around credentialing, which they have so much experience in.

1 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: The only other thing  
2 I wanted to ask is will the coordinating board at any time be  
3 funding this, or help supplement this, especially if we're  
4 looking at personnel?

5 MS. ARBOUR: This credential library? The  
6 coordinating board staff were interested in using some of the  
7 (sounds like) GEAR funds to support providers in uploading the  
8 information. I'm not sure where they are in that process, or if  
9 it's been formally approved, but I know that staff were  
10 interested in finding creative uses of the GEAR funding to help  
11 with getting the information loaded into the library, once  
12 procured.

13 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Thirty-seven sixty-  
14 seven was not funded, right?

15 MS. ARBOUR: Correct.

16 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: I'm looking at it  
17 here. My concern is that--there are some really good things  
18 about having a credential library. I agree with the chairman. I  
19 just don't want it to be something that we're gonna be paying  
20 for the rest--that's gonna be a line item, as Larry Temple used  
21 to say. You know, we don't wanna have a line item implemented in  
22 our yearly costs. Is there anybody on staff that could currently  
23 do this?

24 MS. ARBOUR: No.

25 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: No?

1 MS. ARBOUR: There are--we have staff  
2 expertise and other agencies have expertise from survey work  
3 they've done and information gathered from employers, but  
4 developing an actual library and de-duplicating and getting all  
5 of the competencies to each of the credentials would be  
6 something that I don't believe we're staffed to address.

7 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Would the commission  
8 be--well, how does the commission feel about having Texas Hire  
9 coordinating board supplement some of the salary of this  
10 individual? Could we do that? Is it something that we have to  
11 take total costs of, of this person (inaudible) this person that  
12 we're hiring, or since it's a joint effort, could we have them  
13 pay for part of it?

14 MS. ARBOUR: I have not made that proposal  
15 to the coordinating board. The way we envisioned the contract  
16 working, I thought--we recommended that we would on-board and  
17 have the person reporting solely to Kerry Ballast or I. But we  
18 could certainly take that back and have the discussion, if  
19 that's the preference.

20 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: I'd also like to  
21 recommend--or commend you for the fact that you're gonna be  
22 using VR funding. I think that's a great idea. I think any time  
23 that we have an initiative that's rolled out and there's  
24 discussion among the directors, that we always look at ways that

25

1 we can use some of our VR funding to fund some of these  
2 programs. So, you know, I commend you and your staff for that.

3 MS. ARBOUR: I will say Director Cheryl  
4 Fuller is always very helpful in these discussions, to see if  
5 there will be a proportionate benefit to the VR participants,  
6 and you'll see that VR funding is included in a number of these  
7 for that reason. So, it's a good partnership.

8 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Yes.

9 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Which is a good point

10 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Yeah.

11 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: I mean, these tools,  
12 they're available to all Texans, and I think we all sort of  
13 recognize that our vocational rehabilitation (inaudible-audio  
14 drop) one or more limitations that require some sort of special  
15 effort. I think it only makes sense to supplement things that  
16 are meant for all Texans with available funds to ensure that all  
17 Texans can actually access these things. I actually think that's  
18 a really good move.

19 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Yeah. You know,  
20 during the time of the pandemic, we allowed the boards to be  
21 real creative, and I think the agency was creative as a whole.  
22 And so, just to continue the--just to--my point on the  
23 vocational rehabilitation funding, I think we should look at  
24 different ways, think outside the box, as we say, to look at  
25 ways to fund programs, exactly what you're talking about here,

1 and see what we can do to use VR funding for other programs. I  
2 mean, I know this isn't probably the right time to mention this,  
3 but again, I wanted to complement you. That was one of the  
4 things that stood out when we talked about this credential  
5 library is the fact that you were using VR money to offset some  
6 of the expenses. And I would ask that we continue to look at  
7 ways, whenever there are opportunities for using VR money,  
8 because we all know that sometimes we have some left over, and  
9 we'd like to be creative on how we can use that funding. There's  
10 a book I know many folks in this room have probably read, saying  
11 "Getting to Yes" that lawyers read, and so that's what I'd like  
12 to see. Let's look at a way to say yes on how we could use VR  
13 funding when it comes to initiatives similar to this.

14 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: As we're talking  
15 about VR funding, that's only the use of those funds that are--  
16 because we're going to, again, have the programs and services  
17 that we're implementing geared towards that population  
18 (inaudible) as well. And so, that's the reason for the use of  
19 those funds (inaudible) serve all Texans, as you and the  
20 chairman both have said, so.

21 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Chairman, so, I like  
22 this initiative. I think the only question I have is, like you  
23 mentioned, having a person take the role on of doing this for  
24 one year. So, if (inaudible) staff could come back and look at  
25 ways to fund that, I'd be open to that at a later date.

1                   CHAIRMAN DANIEL: I share your concern in  
2 terms of the person. I think I do look at it a little  
3 differently than you do. I'd be willing to make that investment  
4 today. I think there's enough going on with just this credential  
5 library and some of the related things that it would fill that  
6 person's portfolio. This is merely just a professional  
7 disagreement. I don't in any way mean to minimize your point.  
8 It's a sound point, and a salient one. Here, I think I might see  
9 a little more workload than perhaps you're seeing, and that's  
10 perfectly okay. I would be willing to implement the proposal as  
11 staff has presented it today, and then invite a further  
12 discussion on other types of joint appointments. Because I think  
13 we've got some--I think we do have a little bit of pent-up  
14 demand that this one-year appointment would help us clear  
15 through. You know, I have to say that Kerry Ballast and others  
16 have done a good job doing their work, plus the different things  
17 that the tri-agency work has brought to us. But I have been  
18 concerned now for several months that we may be over-tasking  
19 some really good people with some important tasks, and this  
20 gives us an opportunity to kind of move Kerry and Courtney and  
21 maybe some other people that I'll talk about like they're not  
22 here, move them back to a supervisory role so that they can do  
23 quality control checks and help us stay on our agenda as an  
24 agency as we work through the tri-agency initiative and put kind  
25 of some of the daily work into a position like this one. So, you

1 know, I would be more in favor today of actually voting this out  
2 just like staff presented it, and then having a subsequent  
3 conversation on this appointment and seeking some formal  
4 agreements with both higher education coordinating board and TEA  
5 in terms of joint appointments under 3767. But again, I wanna  
6 reiterate I'm not minimizing your point, I'm not trying to draw  
7 a line of disagreement here. I think I just see this as an  
8 opportunity to move forward on some things we've already been  
9 doing, and would then raise the same caution flag you've raised  
10 on any future joint appointments.

11 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Chairman, what I see  
12 is a phase one, phase two, and three, and the other. We've all  
13 stated it's going to be an ongoing project, and so we'll get  
14 year one going. I think there's even (inaudible) Courtney's  
15 mentioned the higher education coordinating board and others  
16 that will utilize other funding to help with these initiatives  
17 down the line as well. The employee for one year, staff's  
18 thought about that. There's a reason for that one year. I  
19 wouldn't mix the funding up, because if you have funding coming  
20 from other sources, then you have reporting, and all those  
21 things that you have to deal with as well. But I do see the  
22 other agencies jumping on board and partnering with us in  
23 initiatives as written in this discussion paper.

24 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: You know, I don't  
25 like to get in the daily weeks of the operation of the agency,

1 because that's not what we're--we're not supposed to do. Ed,  
2 recommendation? What's your input?

3 MR. SERNA: I'm sorry, sir, recommendation  
4 on--

5 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Going ahead with the-  
6 -

7 MR. SERNA: I believe that we should, and if  
8 the--

9 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Okay.

10 MR. SERNA: --individual proves to be a  
11 resource that we need to continue to fund, then we'll find the  
12 funding and continue to--we have several individuals that we've  
13 hired under temporary contract for a year that have been with us  
14 for--like the chairman's point, three years. And the contracts--

15 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: I agree.

16 MR. SERNA: --that we execute, or the  
17 hiring, will indicate that there may be (inaudible).

18 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: I agree.

19 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Okay. Any further  
20 discussion?

21 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: None here, Chairman.

22 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: None.

23 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right, if there's no  
24 further discussion, do we have a motion?

25

1                   COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Somehow, you were  
2 able to persuade me, Chairman. I move that we approve the use of  
3 \$446,250 of WIOA statewide funding and 78,750 of vocational  
4 rehabilitation funding to enter into contract with Credential  
5 Engine for development and implementation of a statewide  
6 credential library. I further move that we approve \$98,185 of  
7 WIOA statewide funding for one full-time employee to work one  
8 year to support the implementation of a credential library and  
9 tri-agency work.

10                   COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: I second.

11                   CHAIRMAN DANIEL: It's been moved and  
12 seconded. We're unanimous.

13                   MS. ARBOUR: Thank you.

14                   CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you.

15                   COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Mm-hmm.

16                   CHAIRMAN DANIEL: This is Agenda Item 9,  
17 discussion, consideration, and possible action regarding the  
18 fiscal year 2022 operating budget.

19                   MR. NELSON: Good morning, Chairman,  
20 commissioners, and Mr. Serna. For the record, Chris Nelson,  
21 chief financial officer. Can you hear me?

22                   CHAIRMAN DANIEL: We can.

23                   COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Yes.

24                   MR. NELSON: Okay. Last summer, the  
25 commission approved (inaudible) legislative appropriation

1 request, which has been adopted as part of the General  
2 Appropriations Act following the 87th regular legislative  
3 session. Today, I am bringing modifications to the 2022 GAA  
4 amounts as part of our 2022 itemized operating budget we will  
5 submit in November to the legislative budget board. Before you  
6 and for your approval is a proposed operating budget of  
7 \$2,207,185,903--almost 295 million higher than the GAA amount.  
8 This difference is entirely driven by increases in federal  
9 grants above what we projected last summer, which include the  
10 childcare, unemployment insurance, WIOA, and adult literacy  
11 programs and their respective strategies. TWC's request also  
12 includes an FTE limit of 4,938.5, which is 67 above our FTE  
13 limit of 4,871.5. With continued increased activities related to  
14 COVID-19, TWC will submit a request to exceed our cap with these  
15 100 percent federally funded positions in our childcare and  
16 unemployment insurance strategies. On the last page you will  
17 also see the Work Quest management fee that TWC will charge to  
18 cover its operating costs for administering the Purchasing for  
19 People with Disability program. TWC is requesting a 10.6 percent  
20 Work Quest management fee to cover its operating costs. That  
21 concludes my comments, I'd be happy to answer any questions.

22 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Any comments or questions?

23 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: None here, Chairman.

24 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: None here.

25 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Is there a motion?

1 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Chairman, I move that  
2 we approve fiscal year 2022 operating budget as discussed and  
3 establish a fiscal year 2022 management fee of 10 percent--10.6  
4 percent, to be charged to the central nonprofit Work Quest.

5 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Second.

6 MR. NELSON: Thank you.

7 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: We're unanimous, Chris. He  
8 must be in the Eastern time zone, so he knew an hour ahead of  
9 time what I was gonna say. That must be what happened. This is  
10 Agenda Item 10, childcare service programs and potential name  
11 changes.

12 MS. MILLER: Good morning, Chairman,  
13 commissioners. Reagan Miller, with Childcare and Early Learning  
14 Division. This morning for your consideration is a discussion  
15 paper that we were asked to bring forward by Commissioner  
16 Alvarez and outlines our research regarding the possibility of  
17 recharacterizing CCDF childcare subsidies as scholarships. Each  
18 lead state agency has the flexibility to determine what to name  
19 their programs, and on attachment one we've provided a list of  
20 all of the states and what they have named their CCDF programs.  
21 You'll see that the majority call it either a childcare subsidy  
22 or childcare assistance. We did list two states that have  
23 branded their entire CCDF program as scholarships. Those are  
24 Montana and New Hampshire. And we also noted that two other  
25 states have implemented limited childcare scholarships, which

1 are available only at quality-rated programs, and those are  
2 Arizona and Minnesota. Currently, our TWC rules are titled  
3 childcare services, and within the rule, we use the term  
4 "subsidy" to further describe the childcare services program.  
5 We've also outlined how the boards refer to the childcare  
6 program in attachment two, and we noted a couple of boards that  
7 have used the term "scholarship" in recent media and social  
8 media efforts. Staff were asked how any possible name change  
9 might be implemented, and we've outlined a couple of  
10 considerations. The first would be changes to TWC's childcare  
11 rules, and another possibility is retaining the rule language  
12 but modifying how we refer to the program and outreach material.  
13 And this morning, we're seeking your direction on any possible  
14 name change, and any possible implementation strategies.

15 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Any comments or questions?

16 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Chairman, I have a  
17 comment. I wanna thank staff for bringing this item forward.  
18 Thank you, Reagan and your staff. As stated in my original  
19 request, we can have a profound impact on the way parents and  
20 children view the childcare services we help them to--by helping  
21 them receive--by helping--by help them to receive by calling  
22 them "childcare scholarships" instead of subsidize. This will  
23 help to reinforce that parents are receiving something of value,  
24 something to be proud of, and it helps the parents to be  
25 invested in the childcare that they're receiving. It also

1 highlights the value of quality childcare they are receiving as  
2 well. With that being said, I don't believe it is necessary to  
3 change our rules. We can accomplish our goal by changing the  
4 language to childcare scholarships in our interactions with  
5 parents and our messaging with providers, parents, partners,  
6 kids, and the public. And so, I wanted to thank you for the hard  
7 work that you've put behind this, and as referenced earlier, I  
8 do know that there are two boards that are already using that  
9 term, since we do inform folks that we do provide the top  
10 quality childcare in the state. So, those are my comments. Thank  
11 you, Reagan.

12 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Good job  
13 (inaudible). I think I've spoken on this at the last commission  
14 meeting and heard the young lady who actually had this taking  
15 place I think in Minnesota, so, if I'm not mistaken. In reading  
16 the discussion paper, I too like updating guidance and public-  
17 facing materials, from that standpoint. We're under the tag  
18 childcare services right now, that's the way we refer to it in  
19 Texas. And if it's childcare services, and then underneath that  
20 our marketing materials or public-facing documents referring to  
21 the program as scholarships versus subsidies seems to get us  
22 down the line without having to go in and do a lot of rule  
23 changes and the like. And it sounds like there are two boards  
24 that are already referring to these as scholarships, and not on  
25 the front side but in the marketing materials and the like,

1 they're already doing that. So, it's worth a discussion. I think  
2 it changes the mindset in some ways and the like, and it could  
3 be something of value.

4                   CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Reagan, I appreciate your  
5 work on this. There's a lot of in-depth research that was done,  
6 and you know, I think this is good information to help inform a  
7 decision point. After looking at all the information that you've  
8 compiled and doing a little bit of research on my own and giving  
9 this a considerable amount of thought, I just don't support at  
10 this time calling them scholarships. To me, scholarship implies  
11 that a student qualified in some way through some achievement  
12 that they had and that we would award a scholarship on the basis  
13 of that achievement. And that's not what we're doing here. I  
14 think the qualification is much more fundamental than that and  
15 it's not really based on the idea that the student created, you  
16 know, some achievable thing. And in fact, I think there's a down  
17 side to that in the sense that it would be possible, then, that  
18 parents might not pursue this, thinking that the child would be  
19 subjected to some sort of achievement test or some sort of  
20 qualification on the part of the student. So, you know, I think  
21 scholarships here is a bit of a misnomer. We refer to it in our  
22 rules as childcare services, so that's what we're using  
23 currently. I think childcare assistance is also a much more  
24 descriptive term. And I think we've seen both the federal  
25 government and some other states that use the term childcare

1 assistance. If our concern here is that the word "subsidy" has a  
2 negative connotation, you know, I think that I don't see  
3 necessarily the same connotation with either services or  
4 assistance. I think scholarship and the use of that term creates  
5 an entirely different type of situation surrounding the  
6 perception that people would have of the program. So, you know,  
7 I think it's--this is kind of a multi-part discussion. You know,  
8 in order to change it to scholarships, that would obviously  
9 necessitate a rule change and might possibly necessitate a  
10 statutory change in order to be--for the rules to be in harmony  
11 with the statute. I do concede the point that we can talk about  
12 it in any number of ways. I would not want to see the agency  
13 talk about this program in terms of scholarships, because I  
14 don't think the student's actually earning that. I think the  
15 qualifications based on salary and other factors are at the  
16 parental level, and in fact the award, as I understand the  
17 program, goes through the board. It's not actually awarded to  
18 the student. It goes through the board on behalf of the parent,  
19 with the childcare provider. And so, you know, I think there's a  
20 lot of factors here. I've spent several days thinking through  
21 this and studying the research you've done. I think that informs  
22 it at this time. But based on the work you've done and certainly  
23 some other things that I've read, I'm not in favor of referring  
24 to our top childcare assistance program as scholarships. Any  
25 further discussion?

1                   COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: I appreciate the fact  
2 that you referenced it as "top childcare." And you're right, it  
3 is top childcare, and that's the reasoning why I felt like it  
4 was an appropriate time for us, during--especially during this  
5 time, as we travel the state and talk to childcare providers.  
6 This has a huge impact on those folks that live in rural Texas  
7 and those people that live in underserved communities. They  
8 wanna see their students, they wanna see their children be  
9 successful, and I think one of the ways to do that--and I do  
10 think there's a connotative reference when we say subsidized  
11 childcare. At least where I was brought up when we used that  
12 term, it meant you were poor, and you weren't getting the same  
13 quality education like everybody else. And so the idea came up  
14 from the Dr. Quintana Moore, who is a Rice University professor,  
15 and Councilwoman Cisneros out of Houston, and some of the folks  
16 around the state, that when we were talking about this idea of  
17 changing the name, they all mentioned it was a game-changer, and  
18 it is a game-changer, especially for those individuals that may  
19 have never received a scholarship in their life. And so being  
20 able to call quality childcare, quality childcare, an  
21 opportunity to attend on a scholarship to me seems appropriate.  
22 And so I understand the work that was--that you put into this,  
23 but again, we've been talking about, if I'm not mistaken, since  
24 June 30, about the marketing of this agency. And we should  
25 market this agency in a positive way, whether it's through

1 childcare or apprenticeship programs or, you know, highly  
2 skilled individuals. Those are terms that we need to use. And  
3 so, I think people would appreciate it if it, in this particular  
4 case, it doesn't require a rule change. It's just a marketing  
5 campaign, and I think people will do that regardless if we take  
6 action on that today or not. But my hope was that we could at  
7 least be in agreement that changing a name like this would give  
8 those individuals that live in underserved communities an  
9 opportunity to tell their kids that they're receiving a  
10 scholarship and attending a quality childcare provider. And so I  
11 understand there's been a lot of work and research; our office  
12 has done the same thing. This wasn't just something we thought  
13 about overnight and said hey, let's just bring this up. We've  
14 had multiple conversations with people that are in early  
15 childhood development, like Dr. Quintana Moore, who will be  
16 speaking along with Reagan Miller at our super session in  
17 Houston this year. I think we need to start looking at the way  
18 that we perceive childcare in this state, and I think this is a  
19 great way to start it off, by referencing that these individuals  
20 that are gonna be going, it puts them on an even level, and it's  
21 just a name change. That's all it is--it's just a name change.  
22 So, I ask the commission to support me on this, changing the  
23 name from subsidized childcare to scholarships. Other states do  
24 it, and I think we should be on board with them as well.

25

1                   COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: So, again, we're  
2 childcare services, that's what we're--we're not changing that,  
3 childcare services. And in our marketing materials, we're  
4 looking at removing the word subsidies or whatever and using  
5 scholarships whenever we can use it in that standpoint. It's  
6 kind of interesting, because I looked at scholarships. The  
7 chairman brought up merit-based academic performances and the  
8 like, and (inaudible-audio drop) those lines, but I was also  
9 thinking about those scholarships that are given based on need.  
10 And so, those are scholarships that are out there based on need  
11 in addition to academic merits, and (inaudible) things from that  
12 standpoint. That's where I was going with this, is it's a  
13 scholarship not based on anything that this child has done from  
14 an academic standpoint, but it's a scholarship based on need.  
15 And so, if we're not changing rules, if we're updating guidance  
16 and public-facing materials along those lines, I think it's  
17 something that it provides for us an easy out. If it becomes  
18 confusing, we're not having to go back and change rules or  
19 anything along those lines. And then it's an easy out if someone  
20 doesn't like it down the line. I think you've said you've talked  
21 to the childcare--the individuals, the stakeholders, and I'm  
22 always a big advocate and always wanting--I ask Reagan all the  
23 time, "Have you talked to the stakeholders, have you gotten  
24 their input." And if we receive input from those stakeholders  
25 and they're in agreement from that standpoint, then I think I am

1 along the lines of listening to the stakeholders from that  
2 standpoint. So, that's my thoughts.

3 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: No further discussion, is  
4 there a motion?

5 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: I move that we retain  
6 the current rule language but modify how we refer to the program  
7 in the parent provider outreach materials, including websites,  
8 social media, by changing the language to "childcare  
9 scholarships." We should also work with the boards to ensure  
10 consistent communication with parents and providers using the  
11 term childcare scholarships.

12 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: I second.

13 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: It's been moved and  
14 seconded. I assume you're voting in favor of your motion?

15 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Yes.

16 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: You'll be voting in favor?  
17 Show me as voting no.

18 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Okay.

19 MS. MILLER: Thank you, Commissioners.

20 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Thank you, Reagan.

21 MS. MILLER: Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right, this is Agenda  
23 Item 11, IT registered apprenticeship expansion program.

24 MS. BALLAST: Good morning, Chairman Daniel,  
25 Commissioner Alvarez, Commissioner Demerson, and Mr. Serna. For

1 the record, Kerry Ballast, workforce development division. And  
2 based on that conversation we had about Courtney a moment ago, I  
3 wanted to let you know that our daily mantra is "buckle in,"  
4 because exciting and good work.

5 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: What's that, Kerry?  
6 What's that? What's that?

7 MS. BALLAST: Buckle in.

8 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Buckle in, okay.

9 MS. BALLAST: On November 10, 2020, the  
10 commission approved an information technology registered  
11 apprenticeship expansion program funded at \$3 million using WIOA  
12 statewide funds. On May 4, the staff came back to the commission  
13 and requested approval to revise the funding in which the funds  
14 would--the program would be funded in a split--50 percent WIOA  
15 statewide, and 50 percent using our DoL expansion grant funds.  
16 At that point, we went through an RFA, and six applicants were  
17 awarded grants, leaving approximately 1.8 million of the  
18 original 3 million available for a second RFA. Staff seeks  
19 direction on publishing a second RFA for the IT registered  
20 apprenticeship expansion program, to award up to 1.8 million.  
21 That funding would consist of 900,000 WIOA and 900,000 DOL  
22 apprenticeship expansion funding. That concludes my remarks. I  
23 am happy to answer questions. Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Any comments or questions?

25 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: None here, Chairman.

1 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: None. It seems the  
2 right way to handle this.

3 MS. BALLAST: Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: So, I have a couple  
5 questions. So, any sense on why this didn't take off in the  
6 first RFA that we can apply to the second one to move the money  
7 out? Gimme some sense of what happened.

8 MS. BALLAST: Yes, sir, we had a good  
9 response to the first program. One of our--one of the  
10 operational constraints we work in sometimes is we will place  
11 caps on grants to ensure that we fund across the state, and that  
12 we have ample amounts of funds to reach across the many  
13 applicants who come in. In putting out this RFA, we capped our  
14 grant awards at \$200,000, which, while we did have a good  
15 response, capped the amount that we could award at that time,  
16 thereby creating this surplus. We are thinking on issuing a  
17 second RFA. We will lift that cap. We would love to see some  
18 applicants come in who have some bigger plans, some bigger  
19 numbers of participants they can serve, and award some larger  
20 grants.

21 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: I agree the cap's probably  
22 problematic here.

23 MS. BALLAST: Yes, sir.

24 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: So, let's see--we have six  
25 contracts awarded from the first RFA.

1 MS. BALLAST: Yes, sir.

2 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Was there any thought  
3 given to allowing them to expand their project before going out  
4 with a second RFA?

5 MS. BALLAST: I would tell you at this  
6 point, sir, they just got started within the last few weeks.  
7 We're just now seeing start-up, and so we had not entertained  
8 that idea yet.

9 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Well, so I would be really  
10 annoyed if I went through the process, signed the contract,  
11 knowing that I really wanted a bigger project but I fit my  
12 project to the 50 apprentices that the cap would allow me to do--  
13 --and I know for a fact I could have done 200--and then before I  
14 really even get started good, you've already put out a second  
15 RFA that has different rules than the one that I had to  
16 participate under, and I didn't really get a chance to fully  
17 actionize my particular project that I know would have worked.  
18 And I don't have a sense of--I don't even actually know who any  
19 of the six contractees are. I'm just really concerned you're  
20 changing the rules mid-game. I see the need for moving the money  
21 out. I think we have a real need to put some apprenticeship  
22 money to work. But I'm a little worried about what one or more's  
23 reaction might be in terms of them not being able to fully  
24 implement what they wanted because they were subject to the cap,  
25 and the next round won't be.

1 MS. BALLAST: Yes, sir. I'm going to have to  
2 look to expertise on this on what we're able to do as far as  
3 return back to the other grantees. And I'm also looking to  
4 Commissioner Alvarez, if that's something he would like for us  
5 to entertain. Is that something--well, I'm gonna let Courtney  
6 speak to this possibility.

7 MS. ARBOUR: Morning, Courtney Arbour,  
8 workforce division. I just wanted to provide a bit of quick  
9 clarification. I don't know that anyone from procurement  
10 services is here today, but I can tell you in past experiences  
11 since we identified that cap in the first RFP, we would not be  
12 able to open it back up to those existing grantees with the  
13 recognition that anyone who applied the first time applied under  
14 those parameters. So, we have to stay with those parameters  
15 through the course of this grant, unless the RFA or RFP allowed  
16 for additional funds to be added. I don't believe in this case  
17 it did. So, you might find that it's best for us to go back and  
18 look at some options for how to best roll out what we've put  
19 forward today, taking into account how the first RFP did have  
20 that cap. If you'd like to reconsider how we treat those first  
21 round of grants, which I believe we're not going to be able to  
22 add funds to, then we either could table that concept, or we  
23 could do some research and bring it back at another meeting.

24 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right, let's hold on  
25 to that idea. That's a really good explanation.

1                   COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Well, I'm not in  
2 agreement with that, so--we've had--I mean, contracts,  
3 sometimes, we understand that. This isn't the first hiccup we've  
4 had with contracts regarding an RFA that's been out, and so I'd  
5 really like to see this initiative be rolled out as soon as  
6 possible. Like other departments in this agency, we had money  
7 left over. Because of COVID and other circumstances, I certainly  
8 would not like to see this delayed any further than it is. I  
9 mean, we're coming back after meeting on May regarding this. And  
10 again, I understand the concern about contracts, but we've had  
11 other hiccups with contracts in the past and, you know, we've  
12 moved forward. This is not--there was no mistake on this, these  
13 were done the right way. I understand the concern, again, as I  
14 referenced, but I'd really like to see this initiative move  
15 forward and take an action today.

16                   COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: So, in terms of the  
17 concerns, concerns that have been raised, is it the fact that  
18 those that have already been selected were thinking that they  
19 may not--they would be upset from that standpoint of wanting to  
20 come back to do something?

21                   CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Well, I would be.

22                   COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Oh. Yeah, I'm not  
23 sure there's much we can do about that right now. I mean, I--

24                   COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Well, they're already  
25 in place.

1 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Yeah, I'm not sure--

2 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: They're already in  
3 place.

4 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: I'm not sure--

5 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: So regardless, we're  
6 gonna open it up again. It's just delaying the process.

7 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: If there's something  
8 different that's going to be brought back by staff, then we  
9 should look at that. But if it's gonna be more of the same  
10 (inaudible)--

11 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Well, and--

12 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: --and it's not  
13 moving there, we should move forward.

14 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: And Commissioner, you  
15 know, this first RFA was distributed during the pandemic. I  
16 mean, maybe that's the reason why they limited the number of  
17 folks they were gonna do. I don't see why we couldn't allow  
18 them--obviously, we couldn't allow them to apply again, but next  
19 year's money, they would certainly be eligible to apply again  
20 for another grant. I just don't wanna see this delayed.

21 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: I don't wanna see it  
22 delayed, either. I'm just trying to figure out how to give some  
23 equitable treatment to some people here. Of the six that have  
24 contracts, what types of credentials will they be offering  
25 apprentices via their project?

1 MS. BALLAST: If it's okay, sir, I've asked  
2 Desi Holmes (SP) to join.

3 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Mm-hmm.

4 MS. BALLAST: She's on Zoom with us. Desi,  
5 if you could join us and let us know about the applicants and  
6 what programs they'll be focusing on? Hm.

7 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Kerry, do you have  
8 the discussion paper in front of you?

9 MS. BALLAST: Yes, sir.

10 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Because I know it's--  
11 if I'm not mistaken, is it these that are listed in front of us?  
12 Server fundamentals, network fundamentals, security  
13 fundamentals, A+ CompTIA certification?

14 MS. BALLAST: Yes. Yes. And I think, as you  
15 see, we have been moving around to Ben, whose group headed up  
16 the RFA, most likely (sounds like) has our awardees, and what  
17 program--projects they proposed.

18 MS. ARBOUR: I think we'll need just a  
19 couple of minutes to get the information about the six--

20 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Sure.

21 MS. ARBOUR: --since Desi was not able to  
22 join.

23 MS. BALLAST: And we're--and Desi's saying  
24 she's trying to join, but she's muted at this point.

25

1 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Mr. Chairman,  
2 Commissioner Alvarez, as they're getting Desi, reading the  
3 discussion paper, basically this request for the application was  
4 published and six applicants were awarded grants totaling  
5 1.199605, leaving 1.8 available for a second RFA. And so, we're  
6 simply trying to, I guess, issue a second RFA.

7 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: That's correct. Nine  
8 hundred to go through WIOA, and the other 900 through the  
9 apprenticeship expansion grant.

10 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Yeah. So, staff is  
11 briefing me, I mean, that's how I understood it, and there's  
12 really no other way, outside of just leaving the money on the  
13 table, if we don't--I mean, we can't do anything with the other  
14 six that have already been procured. And so right now, we're  
15 basically--staff's asking us to look at issuing a second RFA  
16 with the remaining funds. Okay.

17 MS. ARBOUR: And if I could present an  
18 option, if you all are interested in moving it forward today,  
19 you could give us the latitude to open it up to the grantees who  
20 were just awarded for an additional amount of funding, if we  
21 working with procurement and legal find that that's appropriate  
22 to do that. In your motion, if you'd like for us to explore that  
23 and implement it, we are happy to do that.

24 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: So, that's satisfactory to  
25 me.

1 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Yeah, that'd be good  
2 (inaudible)--

3 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: And I would just say let's  
4 do that, and explore that option and find out if there's an  
5 avenue that we can do that. And in addition to that, following  
6 disposition of this item today, Courtney, I'd like to ask you  
7 and whatever team you need to bring to come by my office to--I'd  
8 like a fuller briefing on apprenticeships and where we are with  
9 some things. And rather than belabor the point today, let's just  
10 talk that way and help me understand kinda where we are and  
11 where we're headed. That's--

12 MS. ARBOUR: Okay.

13 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: So, if I may, can I  
14 ask for a recess so that I can--because I have a motion already  
15 drafted up. I'm gonna need to revisit how I'm gonna make the  
16 motion, if that's okay with the commission.

17 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Mm-hmm.

18 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Absolutely.

19 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Yeah, I think with  
20 what was stated, it allows us to address some of those concerns,  
21 so--

22 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Mm-hmm.

23 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: No, I am giving them  
24 a chance to look at the notes, but I was just stating that what  
25 was stated seems to address the concerns that were issued, so.

1 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Done, Chairman.

2 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: You ready?

3 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Yes, sir.

4 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right, is there any  
5 further discussion?

6 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: No further discussion  
7 here.

8 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Is there a motion?

9 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Chairman, I move that  
10 we approve \$900,000 of WIOA statewide and 900,000 of DoL  
11 apprenticeship expansion funding to publish a second RFA for the  
12 ITRA expansion program to train and minimized--to train a  
13 minimum of 450 eligible participants. I'd also like to give  
14 staff the latitude for the next RFA an opportunity to award the  
15 previous winners additional funding.

16 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: (Inaudible-audio  
17 drop/off mic) second.

18 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: It's been moved and  
19 second, I think we're unanimous.

20 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Second.

21 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right. Thank you.

22 MS. BALLAST: Thank you.

23 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Thank you, Kerry.  
24  
25

1 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Is there anything for  
2 Agenda Item 12? No? Agenda Item 13? No? Board nominations,  
3 Agenda Item 14.

4 MS. WILLIAMS: Good morning, Chairman,  
5 commissioners, and Mr. Serna. For the record, Shunta Williams  
6 with the workforce development division. This morning for your  
7 consideration are workforce board nominations for Workforce  
8 Solutions South Texas, Tarrant County, Golden Crescent, Middle  
9 Rio Grande, the Coastal Bend, Panhandle, and South Plains. Staff  
10 recommends that all nominees be approved, and I'm here to answer  
11 any questions you have.

12 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Any comments or questions?

13 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: None here, Chairman.

14 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: None.

15 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Is there a motion?

16 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: I move to approve the  
17 board nominees for South Texas, Tarrant County, Golden Crescent,  
18 Middle Rio Grande, the Coastal Bend, Panhandle, and South  
19 Plains.

20 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Second.

21 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: It's been moved and  
22 seconded. We're unanimous.

23 MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Legislative report?

25 MR. SERNA: Yes, sir.

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CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Here he comes.

MR. BRITT: Good morning, Mr. Chairman, commissioners, and Mr. Serna. For the record, Michael Britt, governmental relations. In advance of the federal fiscal year ending on September 30, the U.S. House and Senate are expected to take up H.R. 5304, which is a continuing resolution that will fund the federal government from October 1 through December 3 of this year. It will also suspend the federal debt ceiling through December of 2022. U.S. House leadership has announced that they will take up this continuing resolution this week. On the state legislative side of things, yesterday the 87th Texas Legislature's third called session convened, and GR will be monitoring the legislature as the special session progresses. This concludes my remarks this morning, and I'm happy to answer any questions you have.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Any comments or questions?

COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: None here, Chairman.

COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: None.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right, thank you very much.

MR. BRITT: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Thank you, Michael.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Is there an executive director's report today?

1 MR. SERNA: Yes, sir. I've asked Eric Holden  
2 (sic) to provide a brief update. Here he comes to provide a  
3 brief update for you.

4 MR. HOLDEN: Good morning, Chairman Daniel,  
5 Commissioner Alvarez, Commissioner Demerson, and Mr. Serna. For  
6 the record, Eric Holden, deputy director, unemployment insurance  
7 division. I have an update relating to changes in the weekly  
8 unemployment insurance benefit amounts that will affect  
9 claimants that file new initial claims on or after October 3,  
10 2021. This has no effect on existing claims. In accordance with  
11 Texas labor code chapter 207, the minimum and maximum weekly  
12 benefit amounts are established based on the labor market  
13 information department's analysis of Texas average weekly wage  
14 and cover employment for the preceding year. LMA calculated that  
15 the average weekly wage in 2020 was \$1,202.78, an increase of  
16 \$58.72, or 5.1 percent over the preceding year. As such, chapter  
17 207 says the minimum weekly unemployment benefit amount is set  
18 at 7.6 percent of Texas average weekly wage in covered  
19 unemployment. Furthermore, an increase to the minimum weekly  
20 benefit amount may not exceed \$1 in any year. Last year, the  
21 minimum weekly benefit amount was established at \$70. Therefore,  
22 this year the minimum will be increased by \$1 to \$71. Also in  
23 chapter 207, the maximum weekly benefit amount is set at 47.6  
24 percent of Texas' average weekly wage and covered employment.  
25 Furthermore, an increase to the maximum weekly benefit amount

1 may not exceed \$14 in any year. Last year, the maximum weekly  
2 benefit amount was established at \$535. Therefore, this year the  
3 maximum weekly benefit amount is at \$549--an increase of \$14. To  
4 summarize, effective with claims taken on or after October 3,  
5 2021, the minimum unemployment weekly benefit amount will be \$71  
6 and the maximum will be \$549. Again, there is no effect on  
7 existing claims. This concludes my update, and I'm available for  
8 any questions.

9 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Any comments or questions?

10 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Thank you, Eric.

11 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: None here.

12 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you. All right, is  
13 there any other order of business to come before the commission?

14 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: No, none here, thank  
15 you, Chairman.

16 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: None, thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right, is there a  
18 motion to adjourn?

19 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Chairman, I move that  
20 we adjourn.

21 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Second.

22 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: And it's unanimous, we're  
23 adjourned.

24

25