

OFFICIAL

**MINUTES**  
**ARKANSAS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD**  
**April 21, 2020**

The Arkansas Workforce Development Board convened the first Full Board meeting through electronic means on April 21, 2020, beginning at 1:00 p.m. The meeting was conducted remotely utilizing Zoom and teleconference. Chair Tom Anderson presided with the following members voicing their presence: Mr. Len Blaylock, Mr. Lindsay Brown, Mr. Scott Bull, Dr. Charisse Childers, Judge Brandon Ellison, Mr. Jeff Griffin, Mr. Randy Henderson, Ms. Abby Houseworth, Ms. Rebecca Ives, Mr. Johnny Key, Ms. Holley Little, Mr. Alan McClain by proxy Mr. Joe Baxter, Mr. Brian Marsh, Dr. Trenia Miles, Mr. George Nunnally, Dr. Julie Roberson, Mr. Mike Rogers, Mayor James Sanders, Mr. Kelley Sharp, Mr. Robert Thorne, Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes, and Dr. Diana Wright.

Ms. Karen Breashears, Ms. Chanda Chacon, Mr. Randy Finegan, Ms. Melissa Hanesworth, Mr. Alan Hughes, Dr. Maria Markham, and Secretary Mike Preston were unable to attend.

Chair Anderson called the meeting to order at 1:06 p.m. upon seeing a quorum.

Report of Board Director: Chair Tom Anderson recognized the Arkansas Workforce Development Board Director, Arnell Willis. Director Willis informed attendees of the issuance of Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson's "Executive Order No. 20-10 of March 26, 2020, Amending Executive Order No.20-03 Regarding the Public Health Emergency Concerning COVID-19 for the Purpose of Restricting Gatherings to prevent the Spread of COVID-19." Director Willis added the Arkansas legislature addressed the issue via House Bill 1082. House Bill 1082 would allow the utilization of electronic means for public meetings. Similarly, Senate Bill SB3 was recommended as "do pass". The bill is expected to pass during the upcoming 92<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly Fiscal Session.

Director Willis informed attendees that he reached out to the National Governors Association (NGA) seeking guidance on how State Workforce Development Boards should proceed with meetings moving forward with the COVID-19 pandemic and executive orders restricting public meetings. Upon receiving technical assistance from the NGA, Board Staff will present a Remote Meeting Participation Policy for adoption by the Full Board.

**Agenda Item 1 – ACTION – Minutes of the January 21, 2020, Full Board Meeting and the minutes of the February 27, 2020 Executive Committee Meeting:** Chair Tom Anderson asked if there were any additional corrections or revisions to the January 21, 2020, Full Board meeting minutes.

**Hearing none, a motion to accept the January 21, 2020, Full Board meeting minutes with no corrections or revisions was made by Mr. Jeff Griffin and seconded by Mr. Lindsay Brown. The motion carried unanimously with none opposed.**

The following votes recorded and voiced by Board Members on a roll vote as "Aye" for approval, "Nay" for disapproval, or "Abstain" for no vote: Mr. Len Blaylock III, Mr. Lindsay Brown, Mr. Scott Bull, Dr. Charisse Childers, Judge Brandon Ellison, Mr. Jeff Griffin, Ms. Abby Houseworth, Ms. Rebecca Ives, Mr. Johnny Key, Ms. Holley Little, Mr. Brian Marsh, Mr. Alan McClain by proxy Mr. Joe Baxter, Dr. Trenia Miles, Mr. George Nunnally, Dr. Julie Roberson, Mr. Mike Rogers, Mayor James Sanders, Mr. Kelley Sharp, Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes and Dr. Diana Wright.

Next, Chair Anderson asked for any corrections or revisions to the February 27, 2020 Executive Committee meeting before ratification by the Full Board.

**Hearing none, a motion to accept the February 27, 2020 Executive Committee meeting minutes with no corrections or revisions for ratification by the Full Board was made by Mr. Jeff Griffin and seconded by Mr. Johnny Key. The motion carried unanimously with none opposed.**

The following votes recorded and voiced by Board Members on a roll vote as “Aye” for approval, “Nay” for disapproval, or “Abstain” for no vote: Mr. Len Blaylock III, Mr. Lindsay Brown, Mr. Scott Bull, Dr. Charisse Childers, Judge Brandon Ellison, Mr. Jeff Griffin, Ms. Abby Houseworth, Ms. Rebecca Ives, Mr. Johnny Key, Ms. Holley Little, Mr. Brian Marsh, Mr. Alan McClain by proxy Mr. Joe Baxter, Dr. Trenia Miles, Mr. George Nunnally, Dr. Julie Roberson, Mr. Mike Rogers, Mayor James Sanders, Mr. Kelley Sharp, Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes and Dr. Diana Wright.

Report of Chairperson: Chair Anderson referenced the two agenda items that were tabled until the July 21, 2020, Full Board meeting with respect to Board Members’ time under the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic. The two tabled agenda items are the One-Stop Certification Process and the WIOA Dashboard. Chair Anderson informed attendees the Labor and Market Information (LMI) staff has been assisting with large number of Unemployment Insurance claims that created a lack of resources to compile the necessary data for the meeting. Additionally, Chair Anderson informed the public they would have the opportunity to address the Full Board at the end of the meeting.

Report of Director: Chair Tom Anderson recognized Board Member and Director of Arkansas Division of Workforce Services (ADWS) Dr. Charisse Childers to address the Full Board. Dr. Childers began by informing Board Members how extremely busy the Workforce Centers across the state are in response to the large influx of claimants for Unemployment Insurance due to the COVID-19 pandemic. She described how Workforce Center employees were working beyond their normal work hours and work days in order to respond to claimants as quickly as possible. She encouraged Board Members to visit their local offices. Dr. Childers stated that ADWS implemented additional telephone lines as well as a third-party call center to accept the large influx of telephone calls. Additionally, she provided an update of the number of claims since the pandemic started. ADWS received 1,387 UI claims for the week ending March 14, 2020, ; 62,086 for the week ending April 4, 2020, ; but for the week ending April 11, 2020, in the number of claims were reduced to 34,635. She added ADWS continues to encourage claimants to make online applications instead of personal visits to the Workforce Centers in order to maintain safety for staff and other claimants. Data reflected the longest lines are individuals who were denied UI or have user errors. Dr. Childers continued with an update on Pandemic Unemployment Assistance for individuals who are self-employed or independent contractors. PUA will be available the first week of May with payments processed by mid-May. The current UI system is not equipped to handle the PUA payments. This will require a new system that will be operated by the Department of Finance and Administration. PUA payments will be a minimum amount of \$133 but may be higher with supporting documentation. PUA will be in addition to the regular UI \$600.

ADWS has extended benefits that are expiring or have already expired for those who were on UI back to July 2018. Both programs will run until the end of the year. The current federal pandemic compensation in place will run until July 25, 2020.

Report of Staff: Chair Anderson recognized Board Staff Mr. Kris Jones. Mr. Jones provided board members an update on the WIOA State Plan 2020-2023. ADWS has received comments from the U.S. Department of Labor on the plan. EA Staff is working to address the comments and revisions to resubmit the plan.

Mr. Jones proceeded to provide an overview of the four waivers requested. The State received a request last Friday from the U.S. Department of Labor for additional information as to why the reduction of expenditures from 75% to 50% is needed for the Out-of-School Youth (OSY) Waiver. Mr. Jones noted the U.S. Department of Labor has a separate committee designated to review only waivers submitted across the nation.

Mr. Jones reported the Employment Assistance Staff has been meeting weekly with the Local Workforce Development Area Directors to provide technical assistance and updates on federal guidance issued during this time. One strategy staff is utilizing is Teams, which allows Employment assistance staff to share documents while providing Technical Assistance remotely.

Employment Assistance is also opening carry-forward funds and recapturing funds from Rapid Response Activities that might be able to avert layoffs aversions, including training or equipment needed in the work-from-home model to prevent layoffs. Employment Assistance Staff has been working remote. Staff will be conducting Desk Reviews of the Local Workforce Development Boards due to the current circumstances. Mr. Jones clarified that there is no DWS requirement that a business maintains their level of Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) for job postings. Many employers may need to remove the CRC requirement to broaden their pool of applicants. Mr. Jones proceeded to provide an update on the progress of condensing the Board's Strategic Action Plan to a one-page plan. Staff continues to work on the one-page; however, it is still a large document.

Report of Committees:

The committees of Strategic Planning, TANF Oversight, and Program and Performance Evaluation of the Arkansas Workforce Development Board previously scheduled for March 24, 2020 did not convene due to COVID-19 pandemic. Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchison issued "Executive Order No. 20-10 of March 26, 2020, Amending Executive Order No.20-03 Regarding the Public Health Emergency Concerning COVID-19 for the Purpose of Restricting Gatherings to prevent the Spread of COVID-19."

**Agenda Item 2 – INFORMATIONAL – Review of the Arkansas Workforce Development Board's Strategic Action Plan:** Chair Anderson recognized Board Staff Kris Jones to address the Full Board in the review of the Arkansas Workforce Development Board's Strategic Action Plan. Mr. Jones highlighted the strategic goals and strategies for efficiency and respect of time.

**Agenda Item 3 – ACTION – Remote Meeting Participation Policy:** Chair Anderson recognized Board Staff Kris Jones to present a draft policy allowing remote participation of Board Members. Mr. Jones proceeded by breaking the policy down into two sections. One section of the policy would allow for remote participation of the Full Board in the event of a natural disaster or a similar event such as the current circumstances. The other section of the policy would allow a Board Member to attend remotely under specific conditions and terms once per calendar year in the event it was unreasonably hard for them to attend in-person. Mr. Jones reiterated participation is still encouraged for in-person participation.

**A motion to approve the Remote Meeting Participation Policy as presented in the agenda book was made by Mr. Brian Marsh, seconded by Dr. Diana Wright. The motion carried unanimously with none opposed.**

The following votes recorded and voiced by Board Members on a roll vote as "Aye" for approval, "Nay" for disapproval, or "Abstain" for no vote: Mr. Len Blaylock III, Mr. Lindsay Brown, Mr. Scott Bull, Dr. Charisse Childers, Judge Brandon Ellison, Mr. Jeff Griffin, Mr. Randy Henderson, Ms. Abby Houseworth, Ms. Rebecca Ives, Mr. Johnny Key, Ms. Holley Little, Mr. Brian Marsh, Mr. Alan McClain by proxy Mr. Joe

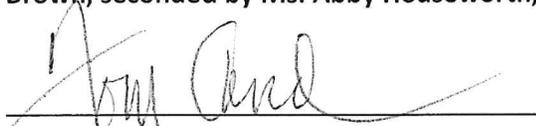
Baxter, Dr. Trenia Miles, Mr. George Nunnally, Dr. Julie Roberson, Mr. Mike Rogers, Mayor James Sanders, Mr. Kelley Sharp, Dr. Cassondra Williams-Stokes and Dr. Diana Wright.

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 public persons of interest attending the meeting through electronic means that they have the opportunity to speak before the Full Board. After a brief silence while the lines were unmuted, Chair Anderson moved into the announcements.

Announcements: Chair Anderson announced the committee meetings of the Arkansas Workforce Development Board that were scheduled in March were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He added the next committee meetings are schedule for June of 2020 before the next Full Board meeting in July 2020 and information will be sent out at a later date.

Adjourn: Chair Tom Anderson adjourned the meeting at 2:02 p.m., **on a motion made by Mr. Lindsay Brown, seconded by Ms. Abby Houseworth, and carried unanimously with none opposed.**

  
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Tom Anderson, Board Chair  
Arkansas Workforce Development Board

  
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Arhell Willis, Director Workforce Development  
Arkansas Division of Workforce Services

*Minutes recorded by Rebecca Edwards  
Arkansas Division of Workforce Services Staff*