

**Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing**  
**170<sup>th</sup> Quarterly Commission Meeting**  
**July 23, 2021**  
**Zoom Meeting**

- MEMBERS PRESENT:** Ms. Amy Hatzel, Ms. Jeannie Taylor, Mr. Thomas Evans, Ms. Barbie Harris, Ms. Gerry Gordon-Brown, Ms. Nancy Perry, Ms. Melissa Kelly, Mr. Eddie Runyon, Ms. Edie Ryan, Mr. George Tunstall IV, and Mr. Alexander Ansley
- MEMBERS ABSENT:** Ms. Dodie Karr, Ms. Michelle Niehaus, and Ms. Susan Rieber
- STAFF PRESENT:** Ms. Virginia Moore and Ms. Elise Kitchen
- PROXY:** None
- COMMUNICATION FACILITATORS:** Ms. Rachel Rodgers, Ms. Audrey Ruiz-Lambert and Ms. Laura Kogut
- VISITORS:** None

Ms. Hatzel, Chair, called the 170<sup>th</sup> Quarterly Commission meeting to order at 12:59 p.m. and thanked the Vice Chair, Ms. Taylor, for her hard work serving two terms as Chair. Ms. Hatzel also welcomed Mr. Ansley to the Commission, congratulating him on his recent appointment to the Board as the Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (AG Bell) Representative. Mr. Evans, Secretary, called the roll, and after confirming there was a quorum. Ms. Hatzel requested that Board members review the minutes from the 169<sup>th</sup> Commission Meeting.

**MR. EVANS (Ms. Taylor) MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE 169<sup>TH</sup> QUARTERLY COMMISSION MEETING AS WRITTEN. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Ms. Hatzel requested that members review the minutes from the Executive Board meeting held in June. There was no discussion.

**MS. HARRIS (Mr. Tunstall) MOVED TO ACCEPT THE EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES AS WRITTEN. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**REPORTS**

**Executive Board:**

Ms. Hatzel stated that that there were two study group proposals presented at the Executive Board meeting, the first of which was Ms. Taylor's request for an extension for the Kentucky Deaf-Blind Community Study group. Ms. Taylor explained that while much has been accomplished in the last year, there are still some goals that are unmet, and as a result, the study group is requesting to extend until December 31, 2021. Ms. Hatzel indicated that the early Childhood Language Access and Acquisition Study Group has also requested an extension for another year. She explained that last year the group took a different approach, choosing to narrow the scope of work to focus more specifically on language acquisition for deaf and hard

of hearing children, birth to age three, and now, after having made significant progress in that area, they would like to shift their focus to children ages three through five.

## **THE EXECUTIVE BOARD REPORT WAS ACCEPTED AS READ.**

### **Agency:**

Ms. Moore began her report by informing the Board that Senator Buford, a longtime friend of the Commission, passed away suddenly in early July and State Representative John “Bam” Carney, another well-respected legislator, also passed away recently after a long illness. She added that a third legislator, Senator West, another friend of the deaf and hard of hearing community, was rushed to the hospital after a heart attack. Ms. Moore expressed her sympathy for the families of those legislators and hope for Senator West’s swift recovery.

Regarding legislation, Ms. Moore indicated the Early Childhood Language Access and Acquisition Study Group is currently working with First Steps to revise their regulations to address gaps regarding services for deaf and hard of hearing children and their families, but there are no specific plans to propose any legislation at this time.

Ms. Moore stated that, surprisingly, the state budget is very healthy and actually has a surplus, which means there be no budget cut this fiscal year. She said she would like to see state employees get a raise, since they have not had a pay increase since 2001, but it seems unlikely. Legislation was proposed in 2020 to provide a cost of living adjustment increase for all state employees based on the consumer price index for the next two years, but House Bill 143 did not make it past the House Appropriation and Revenue Committee. Ms. Moore added that legislative session 2022 will be yet another budget year, this time to determine the budget for the next two years, putting the state back on track to return to a biennial budget cycle.

Regarding personnel, Ms. Moore reported that an individual has been recommended to Personnel to fill the Administrative Specialist II position, and she expects to be notified soon as to whether or not that individual will be approved. Ms. Moore also stated that she is continuing to search for an Executive Administrative Secretary, but locating candidates who can sign fluently has proved to be difficult. She indicated she will keep the Board apprised of any new developments.

Ms. Moore informed the Board that the governor signed a proclamation declaring June 16 “Interpreter Appreciation Day” and shared her appreciation of the governor’s statement that when KCDHH opened the door to language access for the deaf and hard of hearing in Kentucky, he opened the door to access in all languages. Ms. Moore reported that the number of languages represented at the celebration was amazing and indicated that Kentucky has diverse communities representing over 100 countries and more than 120 languages. She added that this was the first time ASL was publicly recognized by the governor as a cultural language, indicating a shift in the public’s perception of deafness as a disability to a need for language access. Mr. Runyon expressed his appreciation for all of this and mentioned that

Ms. Moore reported that the governor’s COVID-19 updates are transitioning to weekly “Team Kentucky Updates”, which KCDHH will continue to interpret. She informed the Board that during one of those updates, the governor spoke about the large number of manufacturing jobs that are available due to the current economic boom and indicated that many of those jobs pay \$25 per hour or more with no degree requirement. Ms. Moore said she requested a list of the factories

with job openings so that KCDHH could potentially advertise those to the deaf and hard of hearing community.

Ms. Moore stated that rapid spread of the Delta variant of the COVID-19 virus is of growing concern. Mr. Tunstall inquired as to whether or not masks will be required, and Ms. Moore responded that the governor has not mandated the use of masks at this time. She reminded the Board how important it is to make sure our constituents have access to accurate information and emphasized the importance of checking the validity of any source before sharing in order to avoid spreading misinformation. Ms. Perry requested that we begin put some information on our website about the Delta variant and asked whether or not a COVID-19 booster will be available. Ms. Moore stated she would do some vlogs about the Delta variant and keep the website up-to-date with current COVID-19 information including the booster if and when it becomes available. Ms. Taylor added that confirmed cases of the Peru variant, which is also very dangerous, have recently been reported in Texas. Ms. Moore provided a brief explanation of herd immunity and reiterated that she will begin posting informational COVID-19 vlogs on our website.

At the time the Commission meeting took place, Ms. Moore indicated KCDHH would have a booth at the state fair and would need volunteers; however, the booth sponsor, Heuser Hearing Institute, has since decided not to participate in the event due to the rising number of cases of the Delta variant. As a result, KCDHH will not have a booth at the state fair this year.

Ms. Moore also reported that in addition to partnering with Hearing Loss Association of America to complete hospital kits for patients and visitors with hearing loss, KCDHH and CHFS Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities partnered with the Louisville Association of the Deaf (LAD), Louisville Metro Department of Public Health and Wellness, and the Fern Creek Community Center to host Deaf Vaccine Day. She said that while the number of participants who chose to receive the vaccination was lower than anticipated, it was still a good opportunity to provide education and awareness.

Ms. Moore stated that the Telecommunications Access Program (TAP) Advisory Board was finally able to meet and conduct business in April after canceling the previous year's spring meeting and being unable to conduct business in the October 2020 meeting, as there were not enough members present for a quorum. She informed the Board that some members of the TAP Advisory Board struggled to access virtual platforms such as Zoom, as they did not have the right equipment or access to reliable internet service. Ms. Moore shared that KCDHH loaned mobile Wi-Fi units and iPads to members in rural areas with no internet access, so they could access the meeting remotely. She also shared that orders for TAP equipment are caught up, but some consumers have yet to receive their equipment. She explained that vendors are struggling to get parts like the chips needed for iPhones, so shipments are being delayed as a result. Ms. Moore said that in order to rectify this situation, the vendor is upgrading the phones to the next level which they already have on hand until those parts are available again.

Ms. Moore announced that KCDHH reopened its doors to eligible candidates for the National Interpreter Certification Exams. She stated that safety precautions are in place, and openings are limited, but the testing site is back in business.

Ms. Moore reported that KCDHH recently posted a vlog explaining the new process for getting a license or REAL ID, as that responsibility is being transitioned out of the County Clerks' Offices into regional locations under the Department of Transportation (DOT). She emphasized that this transition has not yet taken place, but when it does, it will happen fast, so constituents need to

be prepared for that. Ms. Taylor mentioned that legislation was passed this year requiring everyone to have a vision test in order to renew their driver's license as of 2024, which may need to be noted as well on the KCDHH website. Ms. Moore said DOT still does not have signage posted notifying Kentuckians that they can have their hearing status noted in their database, which was the result of legislation passed a few years ago. She reminded the Board that the intent of this law is to notify police officers when they make a traffic stop that there may be a communication issue as a result of hearing loss, and that information will come up along with everything else when they do a search for a license plate number. She indicated that information will be posted regarding the vision test closer to the effective date.

Regarding the 211 presentation by Communication Service for the Deaf (CSD) focused on a service called Direct Connect ASL Now, Ms. Moore explained that 211 is a three digit phone number that individuals can call to be connected with programs and services that provide resources such as clothing, food, financial assistance, and other needs. She said Direct Connect ASL Now is a service provided by CSD for organizations such as 211 centers, agencies, or businesses to partner together through contract agreements to better serve the deaf community by facilitating direct ASL communication rather than using VRS services, but she clarified that Kentucky does not yet have that service. Ms. Taylor added that there will be a new suicide hotline, and there is a committee in place to ensure that it is accessible to all. She indicated that she would like to see KCDHH involved in that process, and Ms. Moore said she would follow up with Ms. Niehaus.

In closing, Ms. Moore mentioned that the National Hands & Voice Conference will take place in late September in Tennessee and indicated that KCDHH staff members from the Information Referral and Advocacy department plan to attend. She also praised the Kentucky chapter's ongoing efforts with and on behalf of parents of children with hearing loss.

## **THE AGENCY REPORT WAS ACCEPTED AS READ.**

### **Finance:**

Ms. Moore reported that, as a result of savings in outreach and travel due to COVID-19 restrictions in FY 2020, there was a surplus of funds that rolled over at the end of the fiscal year. She added that these funds could potentially be reallocated to the agency in the new fiscal year, and she will keep the Board apprised.

## **THE FINANCE REPORT WAS ACCEPTED AS READ.**

### **Early Childhood Language Access and Acquisition:**

Ms. Hatzel reported that she and Ms. Moore as well as the Executive Staff Advisor, Kentucky Hands & Voices (H&V) Director and Assistant Director met with Chief of Staff of the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services and several staff from First Steps to follow up on the March 12 presentation. She said First Steps staff indicated they have met on several occasions with others at the Department for Public Health (DPH) and have taken all of the concerns into consideration that were mentioned at the meeting and addressed in the PowerPoint. Ms. Hatzel shared that the DPH Assistant Director contacted Ms. Moore and forwarded their own presentation to her, which addressed each one of the three major points in the original PowerPoint and outlined the steps they plan to take to address these issues within their organization, which included making changes in their regulations and policies. She informed that Board that the same KCDHH and H&V staff met again at the KCDHH office to discuss those

regulations and policies and identify and document the areas that need to be revised, and when that's finalized, the group plans to meet with the DPH Assistant Director to discuss those recommendations.

## **THE EARLY CHILDHOOD LANGUAGE ACCESS AND ACQUISITION STUDY GROUP REPORT WAS ACCEPTED AS READ.**

### **Kentucky Deaf-Blind Community:**

Ms. Taylor reported the study group met in June, and since then a final draft of the Deaf-Blind Resource Guide has approved and given to the Program Coordinator for the KATS Network to be made into an accessible PDF, the accessibility review of the KCDHH website has been completed, and the questionnaire is in its final draft stage. She stated that the communication cards are also ready for review and feedback from the study group as is the children and youth-focused fact sheet. Ms. Taylor explained that the study group needs the requested six-month extension to develop the Deaf-Blind landing page for the KCDHH website, record informational videos to be placed on that landing page, and get the questionnaire sent out to the community through channels that maximize the opportunity to reach the largest number of people in the Deaf-Blind community. She added that the results of the questionnaire will help to provide a clearer picture of the needs of the Deaf-Blind community and determine what actions KCDHH can take to advocate for services.

Ms. Hatzel inquired about the source of the statistics being used on the fact sheets, and Ms. Taylor responded that these are national statistics, many of which are provided by the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC). She explained that one of the issues with statistics relating to deaf-blindness is the definition, meaning that deaf-blindness encompasses everything from fully deaf and blind to various levels of combined hearing and vision loss, many of which are not always reported as deaf-blindness. Mr. Runyon confirmed that, sharing his own personal story of being shifted out of the hearing loss category and re-categorizing him as having a speech impairment at school because that was the label that would get him the funds needed to pay for some of the things he needed. Mr. Evans also expressed concern regarding the label of "deaf-blind", which doesn't intuitively lend itself to the majority of the population that falls in this spectrum of combined hearing and vision loss. Mr. Runyon pointed out that statistics are easily skewed because of situations like his and labels that don't seem to match the population as Mr. Evans mentioned, and standardized data is both desperately needed and difficult to come by. Ms. Moore and Ms. Hatzel agreed and confirmed that it continues to be a difficult issue, but ensuring that KCDHH uses verifiable data from reliable sources remains a priority.

## **THE KENTUCKY DEAF-BLIND COMMUNITY STUDY GROUP REPORT WAS ACCEPTED AS READ.**

### **BOARD OPEN FORUM**

Ms. Hatzel announced that due to time constraints, there would be no Open Forum.

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

Ms. Hatzel expressed her appreciation that Ms. Gordon-Brown was re-appointed to her seat on the Board as Kentucky Association of the Deaf representative and welcomed Mr. Ansley once again as the new Alexander Graham Bell Association representative.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Ms. Hatzel opened the discussion of whether or not to continue meeting virtually for quarterly meeting or transition to in-person or hybrid meetings, speaking up in favor of meeting in person but cautioning that the spread of the COVID-19 variants may be cause for reconsideration as the time for the October meeting draws closer. Mr. Evans inquired about the viability of a hybrid solution, and Ms. Taylor brought up some important points regarding accessibility issues in a hybrid meeting that she became aware of as a result of a similar discussion at the Mental Health Advisory Committee meeting. She shared that there would need to be interpreters on site as well as interpreters on Zoom and there would need to be a discussion with the CART captioners regarding whether or not the individuals using captioning on site would be able to access the Zoom captions or if there would need to be 2 captioners as well. There were also comments about masking and social distancing and the communication issues associated with those precautions. Multiple commissioners expressed the desire to be in person but also has concerns regarding the spread of the variants, and Ms. Hatzel recommended postponing a final decision until closer to the next meeting date.

**MS. HARRIS (Ms. Ryan) MOVED TO TABLE THE DISCUSSION UNTIL THE EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING ON SEPTEMBER 3<sup>RD</sup>. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Ms. Hatzel noted that the next item on the agenda was a date change for the October quarterly meeting, and inquired as to the nature of the conflict. Ms. Moore indicated she would be out of town on October 15<sup>th</sup>, the originally scheduled date of the Commission meeting, and requested that it be postponed to October 29<sup>th</sup>.

**MS. GORDON-BROWN (Ms. Taylor) MOVED TO CHANGE THE DATE OF THE 171<sup>ST</sup> QUARTERLY COMMISSION MEETING FROM OCTOBER 15<sup>TH</sup> TO OCTOBER 29<sup>TH</sup>, 2021. THE MOTION PASSED.**

Ms. Hatzel requested that Commissioners review the proposed 2022-2023 Quarterly Commission and Executive Board meeting schedule.

**MS. TAYLOR (Ms. Ryan) MOVED TO APPROVE THE 2022-2023 MEETING DATES AS WRITTEN. THE MOTION PASSED.**

Ms. Moore requested that Board members review the current strategic plan and take note of items that may need to be changed, added or deleted to address consumer needs, keeping in mind those things that have been highlighted as a result of COVID-19. She requested that members email their suggestions to her or a member of the Executive Board, so the agency can begin to work on a plan to present to the Board in October. Ms. Hatzel inquired as to whether or not the plan was to keep the current goals and simply adjust the strategies under each goal as needed, and Ms. Moore responded that as long as the Board was in agreement, that would be the plan. Ms. Moore mentioned that she would like to see a new table or grid added to the Agency Report identifying how often each strategy is implemented each quarter as a sort of snapshot of the Commission's focus for that three month period.

Ms. Hatzel stated that the last point of business for the meeting was voting to approve the study group extensions.

**MS. HARRIS (Ms. Gordon-Brown) MOVED TO EXTEND THE KENTUCKY DEAF-BLIND COMMUNITY STUDY GROUP FOR SIX MONTHS AND EXTEND THE EARLY CHILDHOOD**

**LANGUAGE ACCESS AND ACQUISITION STUDY GROUP FOR A FULL YEAR. THE MOTION PASSED.**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- The Finke Fun Run fundraising event will take place on September 26<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 p.m. on KSD's campus
- The next Executive Board meeting will be held September 3, 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
- TAP Advisory Board meeting will be held October 14, 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
- The 171<sup>st</sup> Quarterly Commission meeting will be held October 29, 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
- The TAP Advisory Board has three vacancies for consumers: two speech-impaired, one hard of hearing, and one deaf.

**MR. TUNSTALL (Ms. Taylor) MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY, and the meeting was adjourned at 4:16 p.m.**