

**Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing**  
**175<sup>th</sup> Quarterly Commission Meeting**  
**October 28, 2022**  
**Salato Wildlife Center, Frankfort, KY**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Amy Hatzel, Jeannie Taylor, Thomas Evans, Barbie Harris, Nancy Perry, Michelle Niehaus, Edie Ryan, Alexander Ansley, Gerry Gordon-Brown, Melissa Kelly, Nancy Perry

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Eddie Runyon, George Tunstall IV, Dodie Karr

**STAFF PRESENT:** Virginia Moore

**COMMUNICATION FACILITATORS:** Rachel Rodgers, Theresa Lott, Tracy Lundergan

**VISITORS:** Archie Harris

Board Chair Ms. Hatzel (the Chair) called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m. Mr. Evans called the roll and confirmed that a quorum was present. The Chair then asked members to review the minutes from the 174<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**Ms. PERRY MOVED (Ms. GORDON-BROWN) TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES FROM THE 174<sup>TH</sup> EXECUTIVE BOARD COMMISSION MEETING. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The Chair then asked members to review the minutes from the Executive Board meeting held on September 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Ms. HARRIS MOVED (Ms. PERRY) TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES FROM THE SEPTEMBER 9<sup>TH</sup> EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**REPORTS**

**Executive Board Report:**

The Chair reported that Mary Pat Regan is no longer on the Commission since she moved from the Cabinet to the Public Service Commission. Ms. Moore has asked the Cabinet to appoint a replacement.

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

### **Agency Report:**

Ms. Moore began by noting that KCDHH staff recently received an 8% raise, which represents the first raise for state employees in ten years. Ms. Moore then explained the new hiring procedure, which empowers her to hire new employees much faster than previously. This will also allow the Agency to hire more qualified workers.

Remarking on the continuation of hybrid work schedules, Ms. Moore observed that staff are more productive when using a hybrid schedule when compared to a conventional in-office schedule.

Ms. Moore and Ms. Kimbell from KCDHH were interviewed by KET regarding the recent regulatory changes allowing over-the-counter hearing aids to be sold, and both expressed some misgivings. Moore said that reducing the price of hearing aids is a noble goal, but that prices may not actually be reduced by the regulatory change, and that it is still vitally important for patients to see an audiologist before buying hearing aids. Ms. Taylor echoed these sentiments, saying that hearing loss can come from many sources, and that hearing aids are not always an appropriate solution.

Ms. Moore then mentioned that the Governor had recently announced a Medicaid expansion to cover hearing aids, hearing exams, and hearing health in general. Moore intends to meet with the Governor's office to determine what specific changes will affect D/HH constituents. Ms. Niehaus asked Ms. Moore to find out whether the expansion would include those who are on Medicaid waivers (i.e., people with disabilities). Mr. Evans asked Moore to determine whether the expansion extended the age for which individuals would be eligible for Medicaid, since chronological age does not always correlate with an individual's developmental age.

Heuser Hearing Language Academy received \$3 million over two years to start a program called Kentucky Hears. This is a mobile hearing screening program that will travel Kentucky doing hearing screenings, disseminating TAP applications and equipment, and collecting important data on the availability of hearing testing. Ms. Moore spoke with them to ask if they would work with school districts, which they agreed to do. She will meet with Heuser periodically to check in on their progress and to receive statistical information.

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

### **Finance Report:**

Ms. Moore noted that at the end of the last fiscal year, the TAP program had money left over for the first time due to lower demand from the pandemic (approximately \$200,000 out of \$1.2 million), but these funds were rolled over to the 2022-23 fiscal year. Delays

in the supply chain are due primarily to the availability of iPhone processors. The agency hopes to ramp up outreach efforts in the coming months to make the community more aware of the TAP equipment that is available to them, particularly through town hall-style meetings. Ms. Moore mentioned that she plans to meet with the Public Service Commission to ask that body to create a fee on internet services to provide internet-capable tech to TAP consumers.

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

### **Emergency Management Study Group:**

Ms. Harris reported that she had been conducting research into communication solutions for first responders, including providing tool boxes to emergency services. Ms. Moore added that she had received such a tool kit from her counterpart in New Mexico which contained advanced equipment. Jim Rivard, the KCDHH IT Specialist, is researching the costs of creating a similar kit for distribution to emergency services in Kentucky.

Ms. Moore noted that she had already asked for a meeting with the Kentucky Department of Emergency Management and Jeremy Slinker, their new director. Ms. Moore also suggested that she and Ms. Harris meet to discuss improving emergency response for Deaf/HOH in and around Danville, as it came to light during DeaFestival that Danville lacks any emergency planning specific to the Deaf population.

The Chair thanked Ms. Harris for her work on the Study Group up to this point.

## **BOARD OPEN FORUM**

The Chair, Mr. Evans, and Ms. Moore led a discussion about changing the form for preventative health examinations to include hearing screening for children entering school in Kentucky. KCDHH has long wanted to pass legislation to increase the rigor of these screenings. After discussion, Ms. Moore noted that Representative Deanna Frazier Gordon, who is an audiologist from Richmond, had reached out to her to schedule a meeting about sponsoring this legislation. Ms. Moore noted that multiple avenues would need to be opened due to significant resistance in the past from the Kentucky Department of Education.

**Ms. TAYLOR MOVED (Mr. ANSLEY) THAT KCDHH SHOULD PURSUE LEGISLATION TO CHANGE THE PREVENTATIVE HEALTH SCREENING FORMS IN KENTUCKY SCHOOLS TO INCLUDE HEARING SCREENINGS. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The Chair noted that several states have already adopted the LEAD-K plan in various formats, including Kansas and West Virginia. In response to a question from Ms. Taylor, Ms. Moore stated that a committee to study the adoption of LEAD-K type legislation in Kentucky would be largely composed of other state agencies, such as Early Childhood Development.

**Ms. RYAN MOVED (Ms. GORDON-BROWN) THAT KCDHH SHOULD CREATE A COMMITTEE TO STUDY LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AMONG CHILDREN IN KENTUCKY, AND TO PURSUE FUNDING TO CARRY OUT THE STUDY. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

- Mr. Archie Harris, a founding member of KCDHH, addressed the board meeting to urge members to get involved and help celebrate the Kentucky School for the Deaf's 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary. KSD was at the center of several educational movements for the Deaf community, and this needs to be known and celebrated. There is a gala on April 15<sup>th</sup> in Lexington to celebrate the School's 200<sup>th</sup> year. Ms. Jennifer Harris is the chairperson for that event.
- The Chair noted that she would like to hold meetings in person moving forward, barring a significant health risk.

**Ms. HARRIS MOVED (Mr. ANSLEY) TO MEET IN PERSON FROM THIS DATE FORWARD WHENEVER POSSIBLE, BEGINNING WITH AN EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING ON DECEMBER 9<sup>TH</sup> OF THIS YEAR. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**Ms. HARRIS MOVED (Ms. TAYLOR) TO ADJOURN.** The meeting was adjourned at 3:57 pm.