



**MEETING OF THE
TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION**

DATE

AUGUST 25, 2020

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

5 Mr. TROBMAN: Good morning, Commissioners.
6 We have no one signed up for public comment this morning.

7 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right. Thank you
8 much. Good morning, Ms. Miller.

9 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you. This brings
10 us to the end of Agenda Items Three through Seven. Let's pause
11 for a few minutes to reset for the rest of the meeting.

12 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right. There's
13 everybody. We're ready to tackle the rest of this.

14 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Do it, do it, do
15 it.

16 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right. This is
17 Agenda Item Eight, discussion and consideration for possible
18 action regarding the 2020 annual report on the transition from
19 military service to employment to the Texas Legislature
20 (inaudible) Abbott as required by Labor Code Section 302.020.

21 BOB GERE: Good morning, Miss. Good
22 morning, Chairman, Commissioner Alvarez, Commissioner Demerson
23 and Mr. Serna. I'm Bob Gere, Director of the Texas Veterans
24 Leadership Program (inaudible) Division. As Texas Labor Code
25 Chapter 302.020 requires the Texas Workforce Commission to

1 submit an annual report on the transition from military service
2 to employment to the Texas Legislature on the 1st of September,
3 the report includes an overview of the legislative requirements,
4 an overview of the Texas Workforce Commission and community
5 partners. It has a veteran and non-veteran unemployment table.
6 I'd like to highlight a change. After receiving guidance, we
7 are highlighting that the unemployment rates we're showing is a
8 12-month moving average. The rates are a 12-month moving
9 average. We also list the multiple veteran programs within the
10 Workforce Commission and our updated numbers. The final
11 section, a list of five most common transitioning military
12 occupational specialties, industry-based certifications that
13 allow for those military occupational specialties and their
14 civilian occupations. For 2020, the top five military
15 occupational specialties were number one, (inaudible), number
16 two, automated logistics specialists material management and
17 supply specialist, number three, wheeled vehicle mechanic,
18 health care specialist/hospital corpsman and number five,
19 communications specialist. Staff is seeking the Commission's
20 approval of this year's annual report for submission to the
21 Texas Legislature. Please let me know if you have any questions
22 or comments. Thank you.

23 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you. Questions or
24 comments?

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1 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Chairman, I'd just
2 like to take this opportunity to thank Bob Gere. Yesterday we
3 had a good discussion, specifically regarding Agenda Item Eight
4 and I'm glad to see that I know that a couple of weeks ago you
5 stressed the importance of focusing on military servicemen and
6 their families. And so I just wanted to take this opportunity
7 to thank Bob for the work that he's been doing. I know we
8 haven't seen him, but I know he's doing good work there at home
9 and working closely with our veterans. I'm also glad to see
10 that we're focusing on industry recognized credentials, anything
11 that makes it possible for military servicemen to make that easy
12 transition. And so after having that discussion with Bob, he's
13 assured me that he's been working behind the scenes, both at the
14 state and federal levels to make sure that these servicemen that
15 are in the military service active duty at some point as they
16 transition out, industry recognizes those credentials that
17 they're receiving and the work experience that they're obtaining
18 while in the military. So, again, I know you have focused on
19 that, Chairman, so I wanted to take this opportunity to thank
20 Bob.

21 BOB GERE: Thank you, Commissioner Alvarez.

22 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Chairman, I too
23 would like to thank the team for the report (inaudible) that's
24 going over. The Texas transition of (inaudible) will be meeting
25 soon at some point. And so, Bob, this is very important as a

1 part of what we're doing in bringing information to that group
2 as well. Skills for transitioning program--I know that that's
3 one that's not there by name, but it's something that we're
4 working on that's going to be part of even ongoing activities in
5 the future. And so we're proud to see that taking place as well
6 and looking forward to those programs similar to that being
7 enhanced and updated as well. And then, lastly, I'd like to
8 just bring attention to the (inaudible) that are listed on page
9 eight and nine under the We Hire Vets Program and recognize
10 those, of course, for the outstanding work that they're doing to
11 bring employment opportunities to our veteran community. And so
12 we're going to continue to do that and that's open to my fellow
13 colleagues as well as we go out honoring these vets at these
14 various employers. They're employees that are put to work and
15 we're proud of the work that those guys are doing for those
16 different employers. Thank you for the report. Looking forward
17 to the final version.

18 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: A couple things. First,
19 the chart on page five--are you going to put a note on that
20 explaining the 12-month rolling average or are we going to
21 change something in there? What's your take?

22 BOB GERE: Yes, Chairman. Under the data
23 source, we're going to put an asterisk and put 12-month moving
24 average unemployment rate to make sure (inaudible).

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1 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Great. Well, that will
2 clear that up. This is a pretty important report. A lot of
3 reports we do are because we're supposed to do them. This
4 particular report I think has a lot of value out and about. And
5 I think folks, particularly in military communities, could
6 really put this report to use in helping match up industries.
7 And what I think is just an incredibly talented pool of work
8 force for the state. Whether someone's mustered out or they've
9 retired from the military, they've chosen Texas as their home.
10 And they have a real opportunity to immediately contribute to
11 the state's economy. And so I hope this report really ends up
12 being a starting point for not just our efforts at TWC for many
13 of the communities across the state who I think view this issue
14 as importantly as I do and certainly my fellow commissioners do.
15 So I hope that we can get this report widely disseminated beyond
16 the legislature and the Governor, which I know will be
17 interested in seeing our findings as well. But on down into the
18 hands of community leaders and our military communities and
19 others who really recognize this work force. I think that
20 reports like this one can help really start a conversation and
21 help us plan some tools to help us really move toward where we
22 want to be with military veterans and their families.

23 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Chairman, if I may
24 add--if I may add to your comments, I totally agree with you. I
25 know a few weeks ago you referenced blended services and how we

1 could touch as many military servicemen as they were
2 transitioning out. And so one of the things that I was able to
3 discuss with Bob yesterday is something that I've had some
4 discussions with. And we did with the folks at Higher Ed at one
5 time. Sometime back, we created a bridge, a crosswalk between
6 apprentices and community colleges. We had folks from Dr. Sally
7 James in our office, back then Dr. Rex Peoples, a great
8 gentleman assisted the agency with being able to fund a program
9 where we were able to create a bridge program allowing
10 individuals that were finishing up apprenticeship schools that
11 could continue their education at a community college or various
12 community colleges around the state receiving college credit.
13 And yesterday I was talking to Bob about this because this is
14 something that would enhance--to me, I feel like this report
15 that we've put together and bringing forth to the Governor
16 allows us to use this as a foundation. There are a couple of
17 ideas that I know that we've talked about with Bob, one being
18 that we would like to see some type of a crosswalk, something
19 that would actually be a template very similar to what was set
20 up with apprenticeship. And the other is looking at ways that
21 those individuals that are transitioning out of military service
22 do receive some type of credentialing. I know in the top one,
23 the top occupational specialty for 2020 was infantrymen and
24 riflemen. Well, that's kind of similar as a police officer. So
25 at some point, it would be nice--and I know it's probably--this

1 is more federal, but it would be nice for those individuals that
2 are in the military that would receive as a transition and as
3 they continue their military service--and I'm sure this is done.
4 I'd like to learn more about it, but that they would receive a
5 credential. So if you're a medic, you'd receive first aid, CPR
6 and some of the other things so that when you transition out,
7 where does an infantryman or a transitioning veteran find this
8 on their background? Is it on their DD 214 or all the
9 credentials that they receive are licensing or certifications
10 listed somewhere? These are discussions that I would like to
11 continue. So, again, I appreciate the fact that the
12 Commissioners have supported anything having to provide an easy
13 transition from military service.

14 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Any questions or
15 comments? Do we have a mission on this issue?

16 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: I move that we
17 approve and submit the 2020 report on the transition from
18 military service to employment as recommended.

19 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: I second.

20 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: It's been moved and a
21 second. We're unanimous. Thank you. There's an Agenda Item
22 Nine discussion, consideration of possible action regarding the
23 distribution of funds to support Texas Rising Star mentors and
24 assessors and board contract year 2021.

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1 ALLISON WILSON: Good morning, Chairman,
2 Commissioners and Mr. Serna. For the record, Allison Wilson,
3 Child Care and Early Learning Division. On July 28, you
4 approved \$10.5 million to support local Texas Rising Star
5 mentors and assessors and board contract year 2021. However,
6 after this approval, staff identified a calculation error. With
7 corrections, the new budget amount is just under \$10.5 million.
8 This revised distribution used the same methodology that was
9 used in BCY 20, including a hold harmless adjustment. That
10 concludes my remarks and I'm happy to answer any questions you
11 have.

12 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Questions or comments?

13 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: No, Chairman.

14 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: None here.

15 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Do we have a motion on
16 this issue?

17 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Chairman, I move
18 that we approve the revised budget amount of \$10,476,962 to
19 support TRS mentors and assessors in BCY 2021 and distribute the
20 TRS mentor and assessor funding as described and illustrated in
21 Attachment One.

22 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Second.

23 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: We're unanimous. Thank
24 you. This is Agenda Item Ten, discussion and consideration for
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1 possible action regarding fiscal year 2020 operating budget
2 modifications.

3 CHRIS NELSON: Good morning, Chairman,
4 Commissioners, Mr. Serna. For the record, Chris Nelson, Chief
5 Financial Officer. This morning I have before you a discussion
6 paper regarding modification to TWC 2020 operating budget. On
7 August 31st of 2020, TWC must be able to demonstrate it has
8 committed the general revenue match funds appropriated to us for
9 budget year 2020. These funds match the 2020 Federal Vocational
10 Rehab Grant. We must also be able to fully extend the 2019 VR
11 Federal Grant last September 30th of 2020, which has already been
12 matched with prior year general revenue funds. COVID-19 started
13 impacting Texas in March of 2020 and has continued throughout
14 the summer. We have determined we will not have enough overall
15 expenditures over this period to accomplish both of these
16 objectives. Since the VR program has come to TWC, we normally
17 see an increase in client service expenditures during the spring
18 and summer months, enough to fully expend the older grant while
19 fully committing any current general revenue. Due to COVID-19,
20 we have seen a decrease in client service expenditures during
21 this period rather than an increase. The plan before you lays
22 out a staff recommendation to fully expend our 2019 federal
23 grant, prioritize the general revenue balance within the VR
24 program on allowable non-matched expenditures and other
25 unexpected COVID-19 costs. We have submitted a request to the

1 legislative budget board to UB or move any unused 2020 general
2 revenue forwarded to budget year 2021, which could be used to
3 pull down additional federal dollars in 2021 if approved. If
4 that is disapproved, we will lapse those unused funds back to
5 the state. That concludes my remarks and I'd be happy to answer
6 any questions.

7 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Questions or comments?

8 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: No comments here.

9 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: None here. Thanks
10 for the briefing, Chris.

11 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Do we have a motion on
12 this issue?

13 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Chairman, I move
14 that we modify fiscal year 2020 operating budget by prioritizing
15 VR federal grant year 2019 expenditures over fiscal year 2020
16 state matching fund expenditures. The remaining 2020 state
17 matching funds should be transferred to cover VR facility
18 integration, business enterprises of Texas and COVID-19
19 expenditures as outlined by staff and the work in Texas user
20 expansion. Any remaining state matching funds should be
21 transferred to appropriation year 21 or lapse back to the state
22 treasury pending instruction from LBB.

23 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: I second that
24 motion.

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1 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Been moved and second.
2 We're unanimous.

3 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you. We have
5 nothing to present for Items 11 and 12, so let's move to Item
6 13, our COVID report.

7 REAGAN MILLER: All right. Good morning,
8 Chairman, Commissioners. For the record, Reagan Miller with
9 Child Care and Early Learning Division. This morning we are
10 seeking your direction on concluding the Child Care
11 Stabilization grants for closed subsidy providers. You
12 authorized this temporary program in May with grants effective
13 on June 1. When we presented this program to you in May, we
14 noted our expectations, that we would support child care
15 providers through the summer until schools reopened. And when
16 you approved this program, you also noted your intent to monitor
17 the need for stabilization grants and evaluate the length of
18 time grant funds would remain available. Part of the grant
19 application required child care providers to affirm that they
20 plan to reopen when their zoned public school reopened. In
21 light of this, and based on the TEA guidance that authorizes a
22 standard four-week extension for schools to physically reopen,
23 we are seeking your guidance on concluding the child care
24 stabilization grant program for all grant recipients effective

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1 September 30th of 2020. And I'd be happy to answer any
2 questions.

3 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Comments or questions?

4 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: No. No, Chairman.

5 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: None here.

6 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Do we have a motion on
7 this issue?

8 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: I move that we
9 conclude the child care stabilization grant for all grant
10 recipients effective September 30, 2020 as discussed.

11 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: I second.

12 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Moved and seconded.

13 We're unanimous.

14 REAGAN MILLER: Thank you.

15 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Thank you, Reagan.

16 Mr. SERNA: We have one more update from
17 Clay Cole on UI activity.

18 CLAY COLE: Good morning, Chairman Daniel,
19 Commissioner Alvarez, Commissioner Demerson, Mr. Serna. For the
20 record, Clay Cole, Unemployment Insurance Division. Two updates
21 today. I want to start off with the UI claims and payment
22 activity update and then talk about the FEMA lost wages
23 assistant program. On the claims and payment activity update,
24 to date we've processed over 4.5 million claims and paid out
25 over \$26 billion in unemployment benefits. UI staff began a new

1 campaign last week to further increase assignment productivity
2 through new streamlined protocols and automated scripts. This
3 past week we produced our assignment inventory by nearly 50,000
4 assignments. And to date, during the pandemic, staff has closed
5 over six million assignments. And for the past months, we
6 continue to handle roughly over 200,000 calls a week and to date
7 we've handled over 4.4 million calls. And I just want to thank
8 our UI staff, contract partners and TWC volunteers for stepping
9 up to help customers in need of our unemployment services, and
10 we're going to continue to take further steps to improve our
11 service delivery to help all those still in need. So now an
12 update on the FEMA lost wages assistant program which provides
13 the extra \$300 per week to eligible UI customers. Beginning
14 with the week ending August 1, 2020 claimants must qualify by
15 being COVID-19 disrupted and monetarily eligible for at least
16 \$100 per week in benefits. Claimants do not need to do anything
17 to receive the extra benefits and do not need to call TWC. They
18 simply need to continue to request payment and TWC will generate
19 the extra payments if they are eligible. TWC submitted our
20 application last week with FEMA and was approved Friday late
21 afternoon, August 21, 2020 for approximately \$1.38 billion in
22 benefits which covers the three weeks being the week ending
23 August the 1st, August the 8th and August the 15th. So within
24 just being funded, like I said, late Friday, staff really
25 stepped it up and just over the last two days, TWC has already

1 paid out almost \$300 million in lost wage assistance benefits
2 that covers those three weeks that I listed, August the 1st, week
3 ending August 8th and August 15. And we learned yesterday that
4 Texas is one of only two states that are paying the lost wage
5 assistance benefits. So we're very thankful and proud of our
6 UI, IT and finance teams for delivering the additional benefits
7 to customers so quickly. And, again, I just want to thank all
8 the teams that had a helping hand and implement this and turned
9 this around for those customers in need. TWC will be submitting
10 a funds request on a weekly basis going forward as FEMA
11 requires. Today we'll submit the week ending August the 22nd and
12 then this coming Saturday we'll submit for the week ending
13 August the 29th. That does keep us kind of a week behind our
14 normal payment process, which we're communicating that through
15 messaging to our customers so they know. For example, people
16 that are requesting this week typically request for week ending
17 August 22 and August 15. And so right now they're just
18 receiving the extra allotment from FEMA for those first three
19 weeks, the 1st, the 8th and the 15th. And so it's not included on
20 the most recent week, August 22. But, like I said, we're going
21 to be communicating that as effectively as we can to our
22 customers so they understand that. And this concludes my update
23 and I'll be happy to answer any questions you might have.

24 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Any questions or
25 comments?

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2 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Chairman, at this
3 time I'd like to thank Clay. I'd also like to echo what he said
4 about the UI staff and TW staff in general for all the hard work
5 that they've put in place to make sure that we do our very best
6 to answer all questions that people may have. I understand that
7 it can be challenging, but I think that Clay and the work that
8 they've done has certainly made things somewhat bearable and
9 pleasant to those that are calling in. I'd also like to take
10 this opportunity to thank our communications team for putting
11 the word out. We get lots of inquiries and calls and e-mails to
12 the office, always asking us various questions. But a lot of
13 the questions have been answered because of our communications
14 team and the folks that work there for putting out this
15 information as soon as possible. And then, again, Ed, thanking
16 him at this time for the continuous interviews that he does and
17 doing quite well. So, Ed, I just wanted to thank you. Clay,
18 you and your team and all the folks, Rosa, and all the folks
19 that work for you. We certainly value all you do for the
20 agency. And I can't say enough about the call center folks at
21 the same time. So thank you, the team, and just everyone in
22 general and our 20 work force boards and their employees as
23 well.

24 CLAY COLE: Thanks, Commissioner Alvarez.
25 Appreciate it.

1 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Same here. I mean,
2 same sentiments and statements stated by Commissioner Alvarez.
3 You guys are just doing an impeccable job in terms of trying to
4 (inaudible) customers that are out there. I always want to
5 overemphasize the need to communicate, and so messaging that you
6 mentioned--we can't do enough of that. It means a lot and then
7 playing on the offensive side and of all the things that you
8 guys are doing. So we are appreciative of the work that's going
9 there. And, lastly, thank you guys for assisting us with the
10 Texas Restaurant Association webinar. We have one for employers
11 and employees, and you guys stood on the employee's side to
12 answer those questions in regards to that industry that's been
13 hit the most. And so we appreciate and they appreciate the
14 responsiveness of the agency to answer their questions about
15 this. Thank you, guys, for participating.

16 CLAY COLE: You're welcome. We enjoyed it.
17 It was a good meeting last week.

18 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right. Thank you for
19 the update. Ed, do we have anything else?

20 Mr. SERNA: No, sir. That's all we have.
21 Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right. We don't have
23 (inaudible) update today and I don't believe the Executive
24 Director's report today.

25 Mr. SERNA: No, sir.

1 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right. Is there any
2 other order of business come before the Commission?

3 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: No, Chairman.

4 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Do we have a motion to
5 adjourn?

6 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Chairman, I move
7 that we adjourn.

8 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: And I second that
9 as the month of August comes and goes. I second that motion.

10 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right. It's been
11 moved and seconded that we adjourn. And we are adjourned.
12 Gentlemen, have a great week.

13 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Yes, too, sir.

14 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: You as well.

15 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Now that was very
16 efficient.

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